

2013 Santa Cruz County

# HOMELESS

P O I N T - I N - T I M E

## CENSUS & SURVEY COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



Report Produced by Applied Survey Research  
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## Acknowledgements

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To the current and past members of the homeless services community, the numbers within this report cannot speak to your dedication, commitment and extreme passion that has made a difference in the lives of homeless individuals, youth and families within Santa Cruz County. We thank you for both your personal commitment to meeting the needs of our homeless community and your support of this project.

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- » Felton Bible Church, Felton
- » Winter Shelter, Santa Cruz and Watsonville
- » Homeless Services Center, Santa Cruz
- » Pajaro Valley Shelter Services, Watsonville
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## Introduction

Close to two million people in the United States experience homelessness each year.<sup>1</sup> For most, this is caused by the gap between income and the cost of housing. Yet for many, health conditions, mental illness, substance abuse, trauma, and lack of support services also prevent them from obtaining stable housing.

All jurisdictions across the United States receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for those experiencing homelessness are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a Point-in-Time count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons sometime during the last ten days of January every two years. The data collected through these counts help the federal government and local jurisdictions better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Local jurisdictions use the findings of their Point-in-Time count to apply for and renew federal funding of local homeless services. In 2012, the Santa Cruz County Continuum of Care received \$1.7 million in federal funds for homeless services.

## Methodology

The 2013 Homeless Census and Survey methodology had three primary components:

- » A Point-in-Time count of the sheltered homeless population on the night of January 24, 2013, including those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and hotels/motels using vouchers;

## Study Definition of Homelessness

In this study, HUD's definition of homelessness for Point-in-Time counts was used. The definition includes individuals and families:

- » Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; or
- » With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.<sup>2</sup>

It is recognized locally and nationally, that this definition does not include all individuals currently experiencing homelessness, including those who are “couch-surfing”, staying in motels/hotels, residing in public institutions, or living in substandard housing.<sup>3</sup>

- » A Point-in-Time count of the unsheltered homeless population on January 25, 2013 from approximately 6 a.m. to noon, including those living outdoors (on the street, in vehicles, in encampments); and
- » A qualitative survey of a representative sample of the homeless population, administered between February 12, 2013 and April 5, 2013.

Between 2011 and 2013 the methodology changed in four ways.

- » In 2013, as part of the unsheltered count, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, Students in Transition program made telephone calls to determine the number of students, and their family members, registered with local McKinney Vento liaisons who met the unsheltered definition of homeless for Point-in-Time Counts. These data were recorded by two geographic regions: North County and South County.
- » Targeted outreach efforts to include those residing in vehicles and mid-county encampment areas.
- » In 2009 and 2011, Santa Cruz County conducted a targeted Point-in-Time count of unsheltered unaccompanied children and youth. In 2013, this method was not employed.
- » In 2013, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development required that all COCs record the number of individuals and persons in families in the Transitional Age Youth age-range (18 through 24 years). While Santa Cruz County has gathered the number of unsheltered youth in this age range since 2009, 2013 was the first year these data were collected for persons in families and all persons residing in county shelters.

For a detailed explanation of the methodology used for the 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey, please refer to Appendix I.

### Project Goals

The Homeless Action Partnership (HAP) and the United Way of Santa Cruz County partnered with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey. Together, they identified several important project goals:

- » To obtain an accurate count of the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the county;
- » To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;
- » To enhance the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- » To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population, and to track progress toward ending homelessness; and
- » To assess the status of specific subpopulations.

The results of both the census and survey presented in this report provide invaluable data regarding the size and characteristics of the homeless population in Santa Cruz County. These data can help guide community-wide efforts to mitigate and end homelessness.



## SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

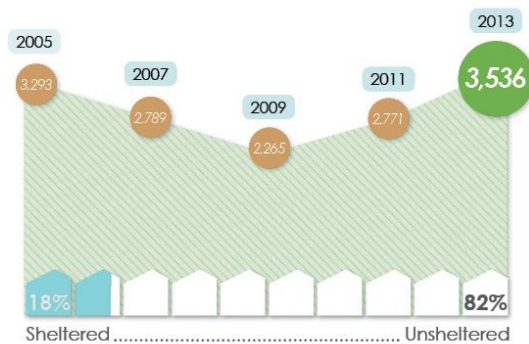
# 2013 Homeless Census & Survey

## Executive Summary

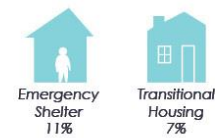
Every two years in January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of their homeless population to gain a better understanding of the individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness, and to apply for federal funding for homeless programs.

The 2013 Santa Cruz County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 369 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals, in order to profile their experience and characteristics.

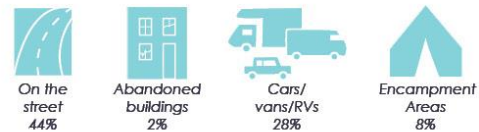
## HOMELESS CENSUS NINE-YEAR TREND



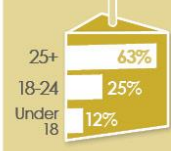
## SHELTERED INCLUDES:



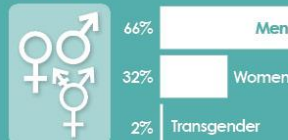
## UNSHeltered INCLUDES:



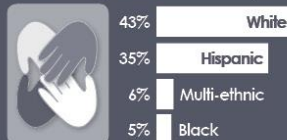
## AGE



## GENDER



## ETHNICITY (TOP 4 RESPONSES)

FOSTER CARE  
(respondents that have ever been in the system)

15%

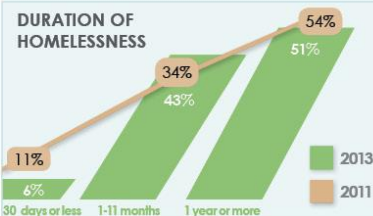
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
(currently experiencing)

129 individuals

## FIRST TIME HOMELESSNESS



## DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS



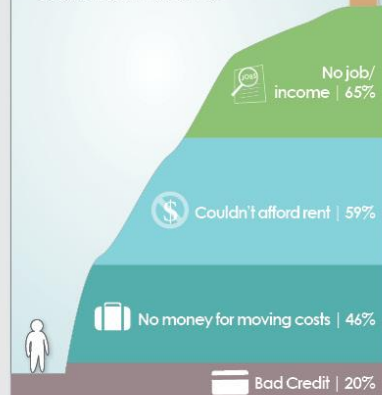
## RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOMELESSNESS



## Top 3 reasons others moved to Santa Cruz County



## OBSTACLES TO SECURING PERMANENT HOUSING



## SHELTERED



1.8 people out of  
10 were sheltered  
(n=641)

**VS.**

8.2 people out of 10  
were unsheltered  
(n=2,895)

## UNSHelterED



### Unsheltered Homeless Census Population by Jurisdiction



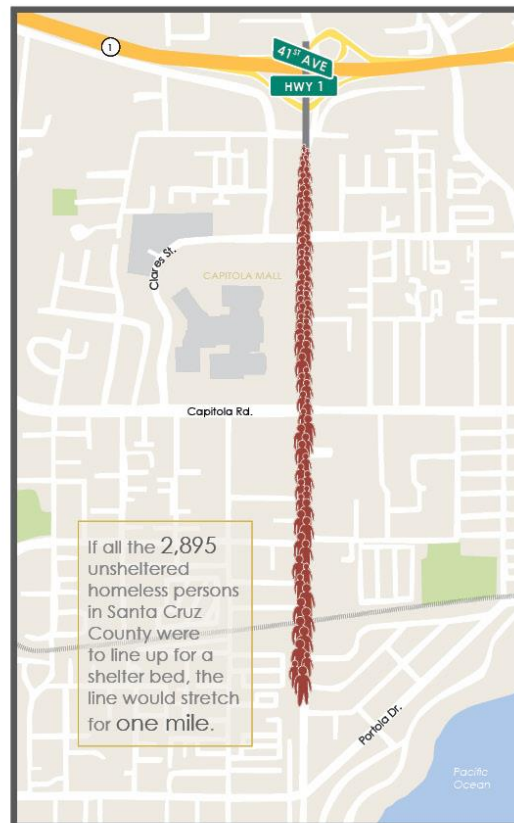
#### TOTAL INCORPORATED: 1,415 PERSONS

- City of Capitola  
1 Person | Less than 1%
- City of Santa Cruz  
892 Persons | 31%
- City of Scotts Valley  
25 Persons | 1%
- City of Watsonville  
497 Persons | 17%

#### TOTAL UNINCORPORATED: 1,372 PERSONS

- Aptos/Rio del Mar  
218 Persons | 8%
- Live Oak/Twin Lakes/Opal Cliffs  
687 Persons | 24%
- North Coast  
30 Persons | 1%
- San Lorenzo Valley  
159 Persons | 6%
- Soquel/Santa Cruz Mountains  
159 Persons | 6%
- South County  
141 Persons | 5%

### SOCIAL MATH



#### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION UNSHelterED HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION



**108 persons**

North County: 101  
South County: 7



### What is a disabling condition?

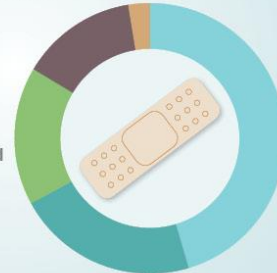
A disabling condition is defined here as a physical disability, mental illness, chronic depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or a developmental disability.

**68%**  
of survey respondents reported a disabling condition.



### DISABLING CONDITIONS

- Mental illness\* (55%)
- Substance abuse (26%)
- Physical disability (20%)
- Chronic physical illness (17%)
- Developmental disability (3%)



\* Mental illness includes PTSD, depression, and other mental illnesses including bipolar and schizophrenia.  
Note: Multiple response question, numbers will not total to 100%.

### WHAT MIGHT HAVE PREVENTED RESPONDENTS' HOMELESSNESS (TOP 4 RESPONSES)

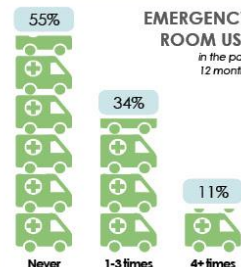


### INCARCERATION



**28%** spent at least 1 or more nights in jail or prison in the past 12 months

### EMERGENCY ROOM USE in the past 12 months



### SERVICES & ASSISTANCE

Government services received  
(Top 3 Responses)



**69%**  
of respondents reported receiving government benefits

**31%**  
reported were NOT receiving any government benefits

Reasons for NOT receiving government services  
(Top 3 Responses)



24%  
Don't think you are eligible



is the amount that 57% of respondents reported as their total monthly income.

Income Gap

\$250/mo

Respondent's Income

\$2,689/mo

Self-Sufficiency Standard

### PANHANDLING

**\$4.90**  
per day is the average income for those survey respondents who reported panhandling

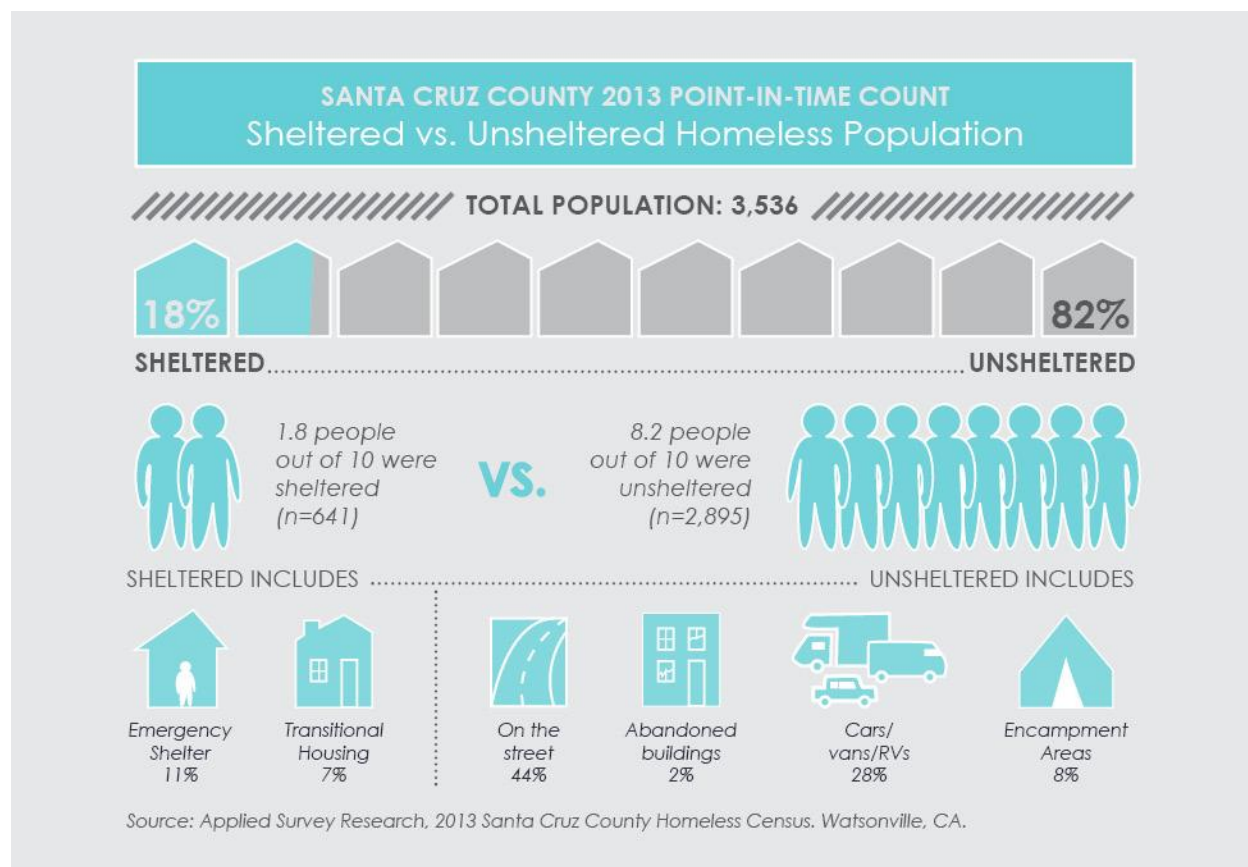
### Summary

These data provide a snapshot of those experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. It provides a basic estimation of the number and characteristics of those experiencing homelessness on any given night in order to inform future service planning and provisioning efforts.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey. Watsonville, CA. For more detail or to view the comprehensive report, please visit [www.appliedsurveyresearch.org](http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org).

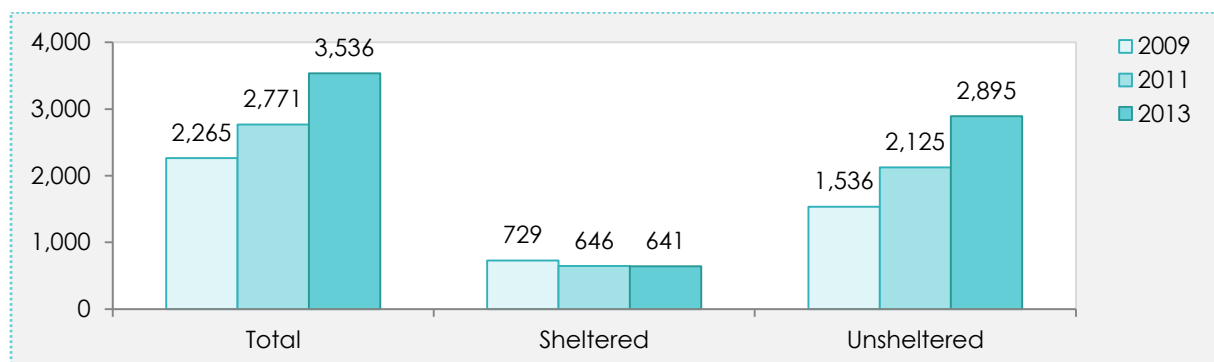
## Point-in-Time Count

### Number and Characteristics of Homeless Persons



A total of 3,536 individuals were counted in Santa Cruz County on the morning of January 22<sup>nd</sup>, this was an increase from 2,771 individuals in 2011. Eighty-two percent of the population was unsheltered, living on the street, in parks, encampments, vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation.

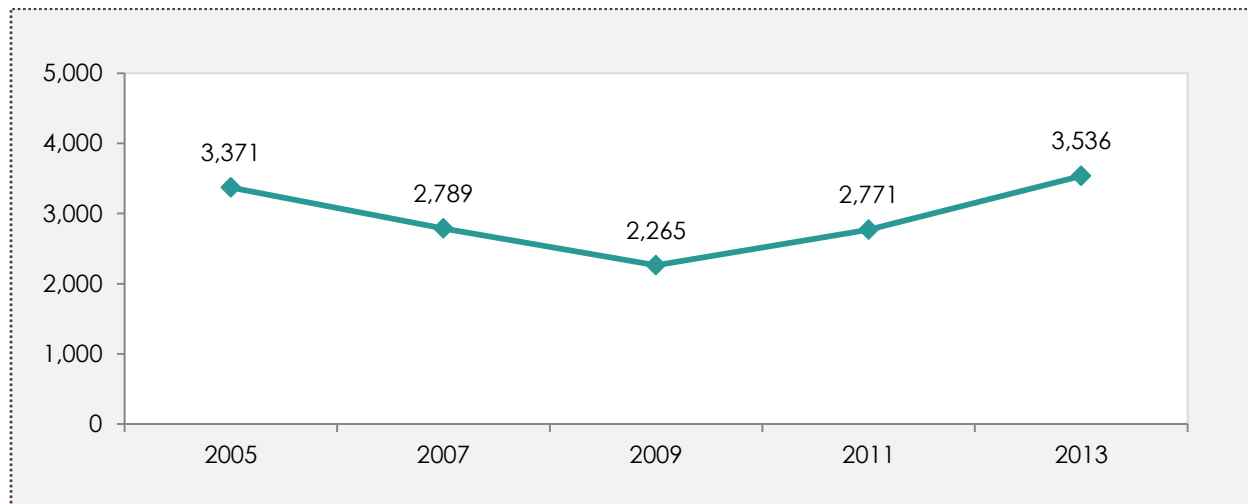
#### TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS COUNT



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

An eight year trend of Santa Cruz County Point-in-Time counts showed an overall increase of 5% in homelessness (165 people) between 2005 and 2012. The five Point-in-Time counts conducted during this time period show a u-shaped trend, with a low of 2,265 in 2009.

#### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HOMELESS COUNT EIGHT YEAR DATA TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

#### Count Demographics

The majority of those counted in the 2013 Point-in-Time Count were single individuals 25 years old and over.

Persons in families represented 15% of the overall homeless population yet they accounted for 54% of the sheltered population. The age distribution of those experiencing homelessness showed 12% of the population were children under the age of 18, 25% were transition age youth (TAY) --ages 18-24-- and 63% were adults age 25 and older.

#### COUNT RESULTS BY FAMILY STATUS (2013)

	Single Individuals	Persons in Families	Total
<b>Street count</b>	2,694	201	2,895
<b>Shelter count</b>	298	343	641
Emergency Shelter	253	149	402
Transitional Housing	45	194	239
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,992</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>3,536</b>

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

**COUNT RESULTS BY FAMILY STATUS AND AGE (2013)**

	Street Count	Emergency Shelter Count	Transitional Housing Count	Total
<b>Persons in Families</b>	201	149	194	544
Under 18 years old	90	93	109	292
18-24 years old	48	10	10	68
25 years or older	63	46	75	184
<b>Single Individuals</b>	2,694	253	45	2,992
Under 18 years old	127	6	0	133
18-24 years old	790	9	15	814
25 years or older	1,777	238	30	2,045
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>3,536</b>

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Total Number of Unsheltered and Sheltered Homeless Persons, by Jurisdiction

As in previous years, the 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census collected data on the geographic distribution of sheltered and unsheltered persons in Santa Cruz County. This data allows for the assessment of program needs addressing homelessness at both the city and county levels.

**UNSHeltered AND SHeltered HOMELESS COUNT POPULATION BY JURISDICTION**

Jurisdiction	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
<b>Total Incorporated</b>	1,220	602	1,821
City of Capitola	1	0	1
City of Santa Cruz	892	459	1,351
City of Scotts Valley	25	0	25
City of Watsonville	352	143	295
<b>Total Unincorporated/Confidential/Scattered Site</b>	1,567	39	1,606
<b>Total County Office of Education</b>	108	0	108
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>3,536</b>

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.



Unsheltered data showed geographical shifts in the county's homeless population between 2011 and 2013. The unincorporated area of Live Oak, Twin Lakes and Opal Cliffs saw the greatest change with an increase of 365 persons. The City of Santa Cruz saw an increase of 213 persons and the City of Watsonville saw of 153 people. Persons in families, households with at least one child under age 18, represented 20% of Watsonville's unsheltered population in 2013.

#### UNSHeltered HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY JURISDICTION AND FAMILY STATUS

Jurisdiction	Individuals			Persons in Families			Total Persons		
	'11	'13	Net	'11	'13	Net	'11	'13	Net
<b>Total Incorporated</b>	1,016	1,309	293	31	106	75	1,047	1,415	368
City of Capitola	14	1	-13	0	0	0	14	1	-13
City of Santa Cruz	657	887	230	19	5	-14	676	892	213
City of Scotts Valley	13	25	12	0	0	0	13	25	12
City of Watsonville	332	396	64	12	101	89	344	497	153
<b>Total Unincorporated</b>	1,049	1,360	311	29	12	-17	1,078	1,372	294
Aptos/Rio Del Mar	207	218	11	4	0	-4	211	218	7
Live Oak/Twin Lakes/Opal Cliffs	305	678	373	17	9	-8	322	687	365
North Coast	60	30	-30	0	0	0	60	30	-30
San Lorenzo Valley	90	156	66	0	3	3	90	159	69
Soquel/Santa Cruz Mountains	135	137	2	8	0	-8	143	137	-6
South County	252	141	111	0	0	0	252	141	-111
<b>Subtotal</b>	2,038	2,668	630	60	118	58	2,125	2,787	662
<b>Total COE Data</b>	NA	25	-	NA	83	-	NA	108	-
North County	NA	18	-	NA	83	-	NA	101	-
South County	NA	7	-	NA	0	-	NA	7	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,038</b>	<b>2,693</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2,125</b>	<b>2,895</b>	<b>770</b>

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Note: The County Office of Education did not report Point-in-Time count data prior to 2013 a subtotal is provided in order to assess comparable unsheltered count data.

## Homeless Survey Findings

### Demographics

The core organizational plan for the 2013 homeless census and survey is described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a “blitz count.” This was followed by an in-person representative survey. The count provides the overall number of persons and basic demographics, and the randomized survey sample is used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the homeless population and subpopulations. Both methods are recommended by HUD and are necessary to meet data reporting standards.

The following section provides an overview of the findings generated from the homeless survey in Santa Cruz County. Surveys were administered to individuals experiencing

homelessness after the completion of the Point-in-Time Count, between Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The survey effort resulted in 369 complete and unique surveys.<sup>4</sup> To ensure a more representative sample, garnering information from subpopulations that are often hidden, surveyors were recruited from multiple organizations and areas and all were asked to meet survey quotas based on living accommodation, age, and geographic location.

#### COMPARISON OF CENSUS AND SURVEY POPULATION

	Census Population	Survey Population
Age 18-24	25%	10%
Age 25+	63%	90%
Single Individuals	94%	94%
Persons in Families	6%	6%
Residing in Shelters	18%	38%
Residing in Vehicles	28%	11%

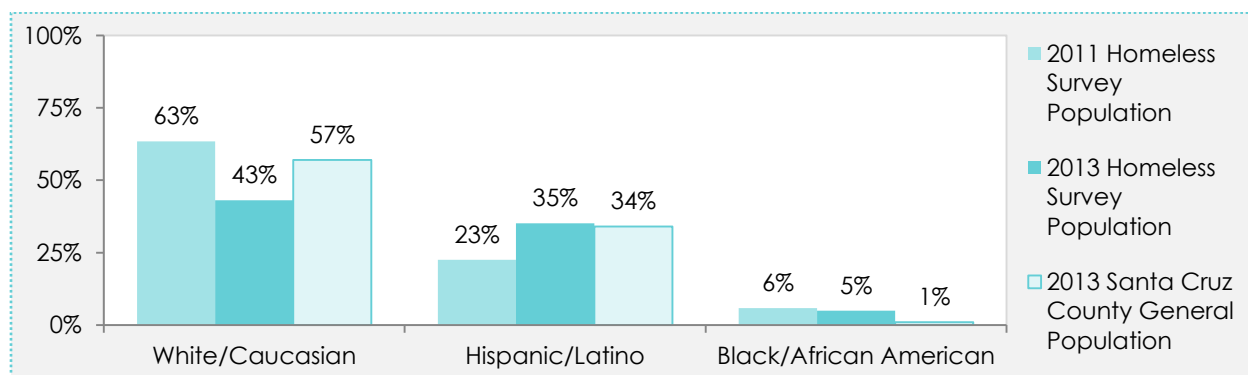
### Gender and Sexual Orientation

More than two-thirds of survey respondents identified as male (66%), 32% as female and 2% as transgender. This gender breakdown was similar to previous years.

Thirteen percent of homeless respondents identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ). While national service data suggests a high number of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ, just 6% of youth survey respondents under age 25 identified as LGBTQ in Santa Cruz County. The 2013 survey was the first time respondents were asked to identify their sexual orientation.

### Race/Ethnicity

Forty-three percent of survey respondents identified as White/Caucasian, followed by Hispanic/Latino (35%), and Black/African American (5%).

**RESPONDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (TOP 3 RACES/ETHNICITIES)**

N: 2011=497; 2013=367

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

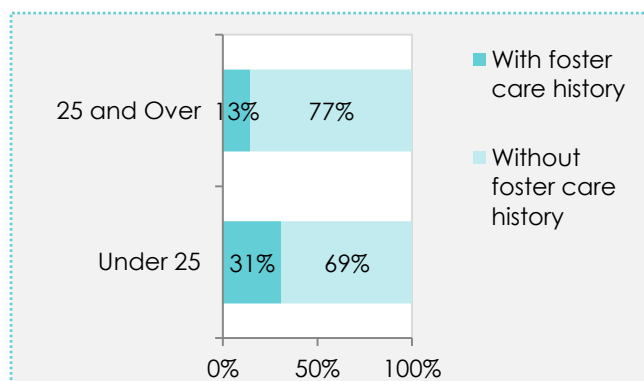
Department of Finance. (2013). *Report P-3: Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity, Detailed Age, and Gender, 2010-2060*.

Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.dof.ca.gov>

**Transition from Foster Care**

It has been estimated that 12 million persons in the United States have been in the foster care system at some point in their life, this represents about 4% of the general population.<sup>5</sup> Researchers have repeatedly noted the connections between foster care and homelessness and this is confirmed by homeless survey data.

Fifteen percent of the 2013 homeless survey respondents reported having been in the foster care system at some point. This was slightly higher than in 2011 (12%). Of those who reported having been in the foster care system, 14% had been in the system for one year or less, while 32% had been in the system for 10 years or more. The percentage of respondents who had been in the foster care system varied by age, 31% of youth under the age of 25 reported they had been in the foster care system<sup>6</sup> compared to just 13% of those 25 years and older.

**FOSTER CARE HISTORY, BY AGE**

2013=364

Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

Note: This question, as worded, was not asked in 2011.

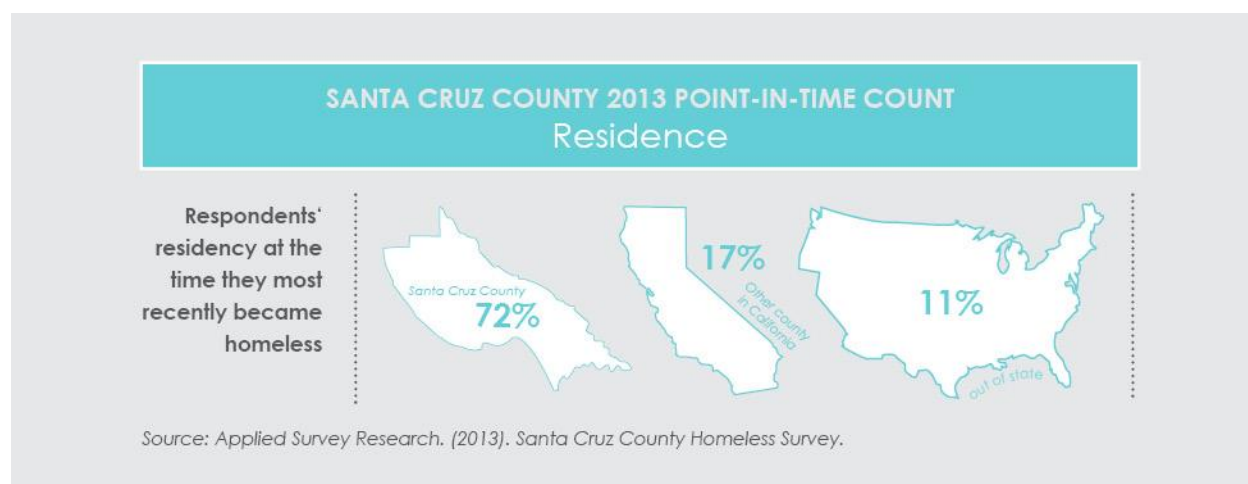
## Living Accommodations

Where individuals resided prior to experiencing homelessness, and where they have resided since, affects the way they seek services. Survey respondents were asked about both the location and conditions in which they were living prior to experiencing homelessness.

### County Residency

More than half (53%) of homeless respondents had lived in Santa Cruz County for 3 years or more, 31% for 10 years or more. Yet, 5% had been in the area for 30 days or less.

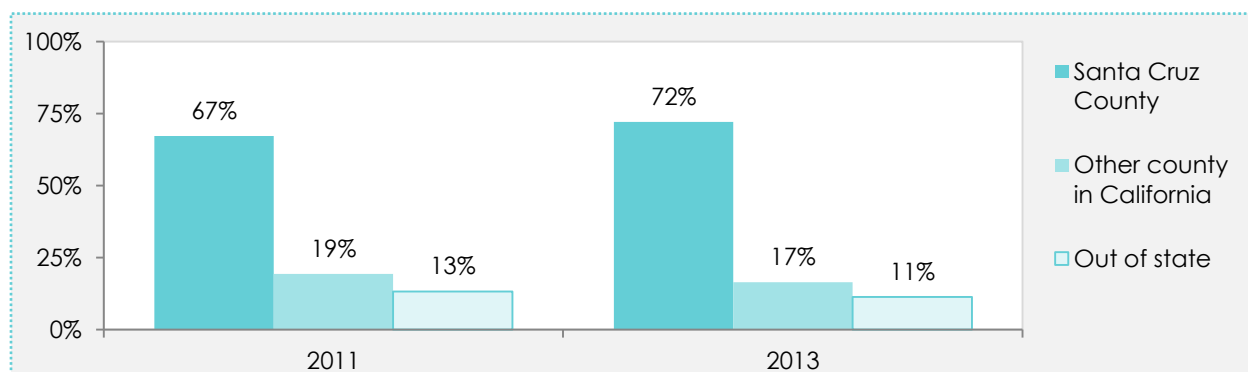
Seventy-two percent of survey respondents reported living in Santa Cruz County at the time they most recently became homeless. Respondents were asked why they moved to Santa Cruz County. Six percent of the population reported they were just “passing through,” 5% moved for “friends or family who live in the area,” and 4% moved to the county for “work or a job.” Three percent of the population reported they moved to Santa Cruz County for homeless services.



Between 2011 and 2013, the percentage who reported having lived in Santa Cruz County at the time they became homeless increased from 67% to 72%. Of 2013 respondents who reported living in Santa Cruz County at the time they most recently became homeless, almost half (46%) had lived in the City of Watsonville, followed by the City of Santa Cruz (42%), and 3% each in the unincorporated areas of Aptos and Soquel.



## WHERE RESPONDENTS WERE LIVING AT THE TIME THEY MOST RECENTLY BECAME HOMELESS



N: 2011=495; 2013=352

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

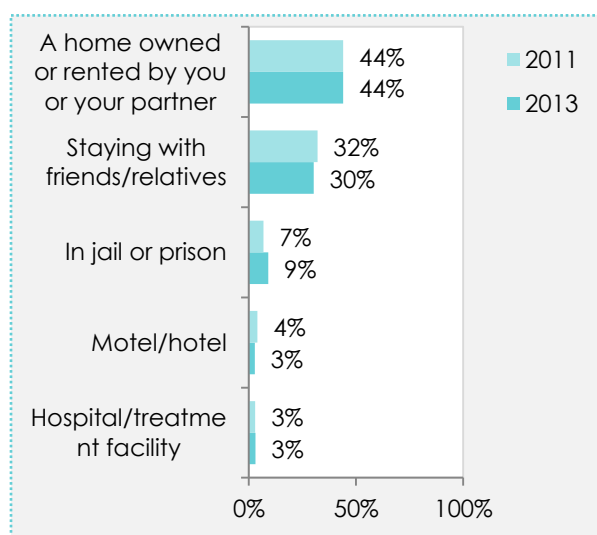
## Previous Living Arrangements

Nearly half (44%) of respondents reported that prior to experiencing homelessness, they were living in a home that they or their partner owned or rented, similar to 2011 (44%). Thirty percent of respondents reported staying with friends or family, and 9% reported they were in a jail/prison prior to becoming homeless.

## Living Alone

Seventy-five percent of respondents reported living alone in 2013, up from 64% in 2011.

## LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)



N: 2011=497 2013=358

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

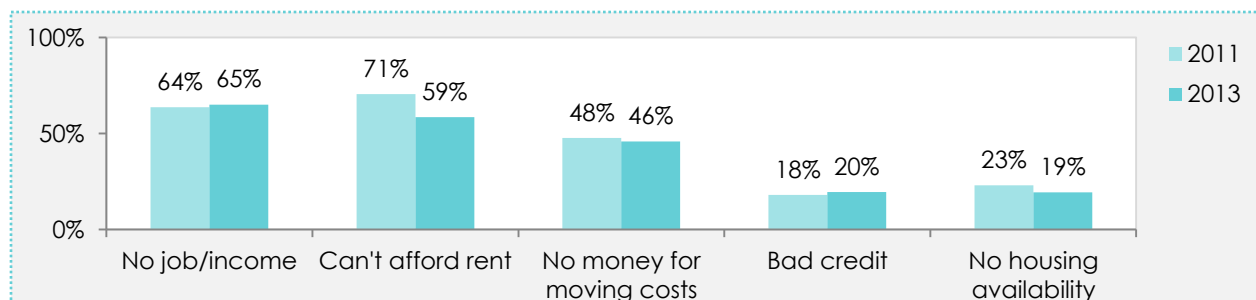
\*Hospital/treatment facility were separate response options in 2011.

## Current Living Arrangements

### Obstacles to Obtaining Permanent Housing

The most commonly cited obstacles to obtaining permanent housing were associated with income. Almost two-thirds (65%) of 2013 respondents reported a lack of job or income, followed by 59% reporting an inability to afford rent, and 46% who didn't have the money for moving costs.

#### CIRCUMSTANCES PREVENTING RESPONDENTS FROM SECURING PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)



Multiple response question, responses will not add to 100%.

2011: 491 respondents offering 1,331 responses; 2013: 347 respondents offering 913 responses.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

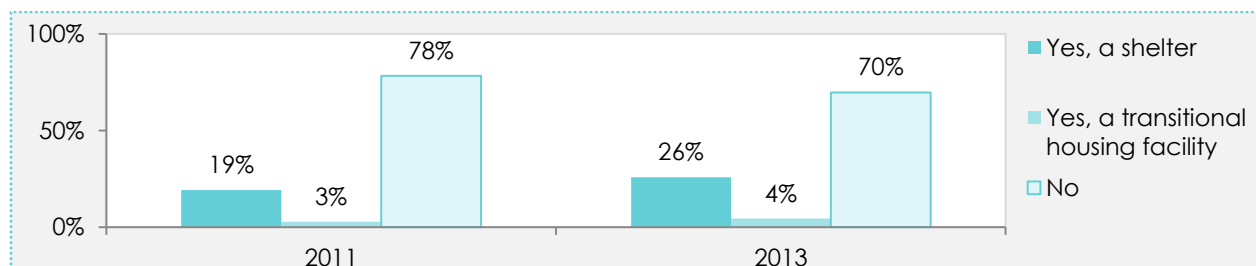
Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### Access to Shelters

Respondents were asked if they were turned away from a shelter in the last 30 days. Twenty-six percent reported they were turned away from an emergency shelter and 4% reported being turned away from a transitional housing facility in 2013.

Of those who were turned away from a shelter in the last month, the three most frequently reported reasons in 2013 were “no beds available” (58%), “alcohol or drug problems” (11%), and “didn't accept partner/friend” (6%). Half as many respondents had been turned away in 2013 because of “alcohol/drug problems” (11% as compared to 22% in 2011).

#### IN THE LAST 30 DAYS, HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO STAY AT A SHELTER OR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITY IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AND BEEN TURNED AWAY?

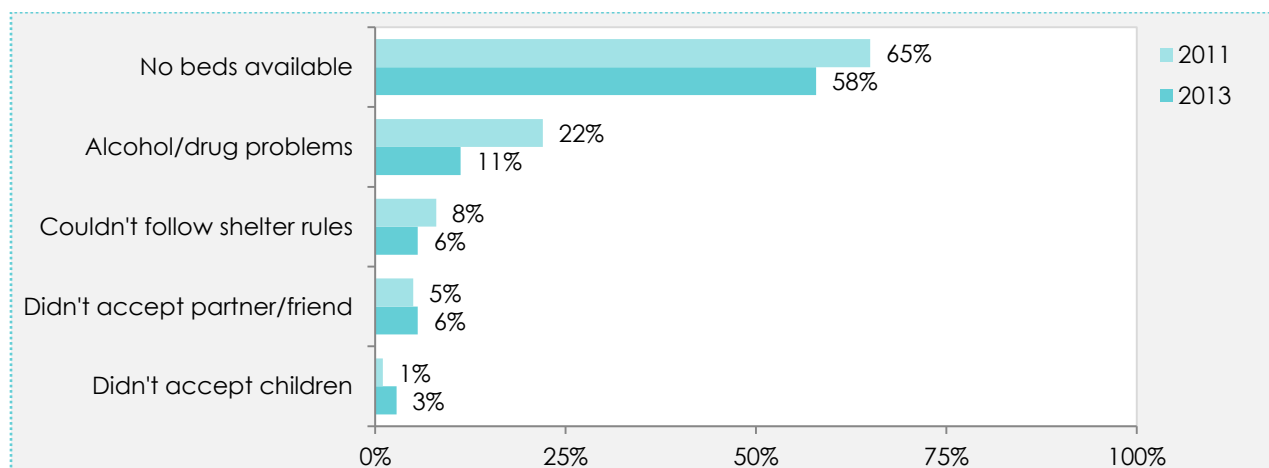


N: 2011=498; 2013=364

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### OF RESPONDENTS WHO TRIED TO STAY AT A SHELTER IN THE MONTH PRIOR TO THE SURVEY, REASONS THEY WERE TURNED AWAY (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)



Multiple response question, responses will not add to 100%.

2011: 100 respondents offering 132 responses; 2013: 107 respondents offering 110 responses.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

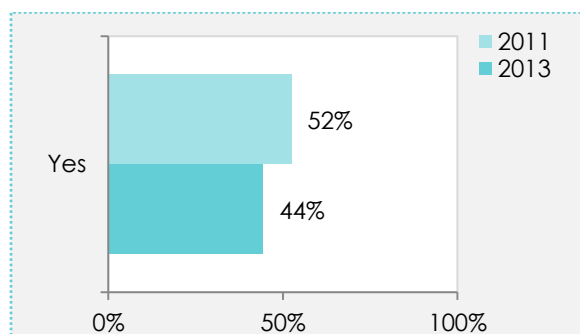
## Occurrence and Length of Homelessness

### Reoccurrence of Homelessness

For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of residential instability. Individuals experience multiple episodes of homelessness as they develop different subsistence strategies and housing opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

First time homelessness is down in 2013. In other words, respondents are experiencing multiple periods of homelessness, rather than just for the first time. In 2013, 44% were experiencing homelessness for the first time, down from half (52%) in 2011.

### RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME



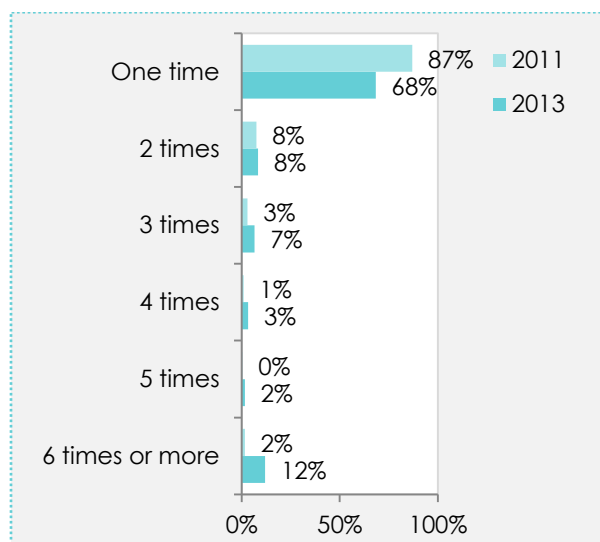
N: 2011=496; 2013=369

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Twelve percent of respondents reported they had been homeless 6 or more times in the past 12 months, while 17% of respondents reported they had been homeless 6 or more times in the past 3 years.

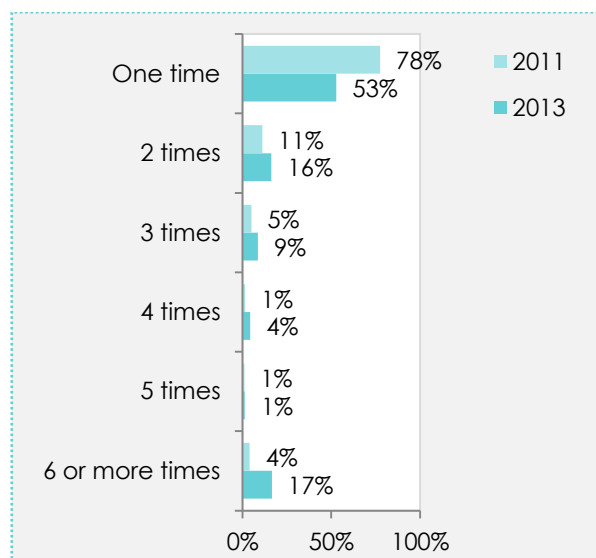
### NUMBER OF TIMES RESPONDENTS HAD BEEN HOMELESS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, INCLUDING THIS TIME



N: 2011=496; 2013=205

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### NUMBER OF TIMES RESPONDENTS HAD BEEN HOMELESS IN THE LAST 3 YEARS, INCLUDING THIS TIME



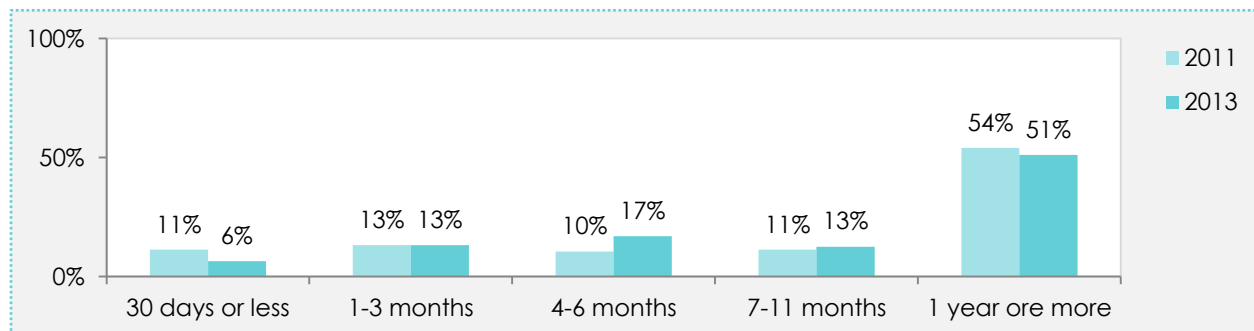
N: 2011=496; 2013=205

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA. Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Duration of Homelessness

While the number of episodes of homelessness increased among respondents in 2013, the length of their current episode of homelessness remained relatively the same. More than half (51%) of respondents reported they had been without housing for one year or more. However, 6% reported their current period of homelessness had been one month or less.

### LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS THIS CURRENT TIME (2013)



N: 2013=360

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.



## Cause of Homelessness

An individual's experience with homelessness is often the result of multiple and compounding factors at both the individual and community level. In a struggling economy, many face financial vulnerability to homelessness.<sup>8</sup>

### Primary Causes of Homelessness

When survey respondents were asked to identify the primary cause of their homelessness, 33% reported job loss, up from 25% in 2011.

Eighteen percent reported an inability to afford rent as the primary cause, followed by alcohol/drug use at 16%. Ten percent of respondents cited mental health issues as a primary cause of their homelessness, up from 3% in 2011.

While it was not one of the top five responses, 9% of survey respondents reported

family/domestic violence as the primary cause of their homelessness in 2013, as compared to 3% in 2011.

### PRIMARY EVENT OR CONDITION THAT LED TO RESPONDENTS' CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)

2011		2013	
Lost job	25%	Lost job	33%
Alcohol or drug use	17%	Could not afford rent	18%
Argument with family or friend	12%	Alcohol or drug use	16%
Family/domestic violence	9%	Evicted	12%
Illness or medical problem	5%	Mental health	10%

N: 2011=493; 2013=359

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

\*"Could not afford rent" and "Evicted" were not asked in 2011

## Prevention of Homelessness

Respondents were asked to identify services that might have prevented them from experiencing homelessness. The most common responses were related to income: 50% reported the need for employment assistance, and 36% reported rent or mortgage assistance.

Twenty-six percent reported that alcohol and drug counseling services might have prevented their homelessness, 21% reported receiving help accessing benefits, and 15% reported case management after release from a hospital, jail, prison or juvenile justice facility.

## WHAT MIGHT HAVE PREVENTED HOMELESSNESS (2013)

	2013
<b>Employment assistance</b>	50%
<b>Rent/mortgage assistance</b>	36%
<b>Alcohol/drug counseling</b>	26%
<b>Mental health services</b>	23%
<b>Help accessing benefits</b>	21%
<b>Case management after leaving hospital/jail/prison/juvenile justice</b>	15%
<b>Legal assistance</b>	13%
<b>Health insurance/services</b>	12%
<b>Transportation benefits</b>	8%

*Multiple response question with 356 respondents offering 740 responses.*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.*

## Government Assistance, Employment, and Income

The homeless survey asked questions about income, employment status, and the use of government assistance, in order to measure how recent economic conditions might have affected individuals experiencing homelessness. The overall economy has improved slightly in the County, as measured by a decrease in the unemployment rate in Santa Cruz County from 15% in 2012 to 12.5% in 2013. This rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It doesn't represent all joblessness.

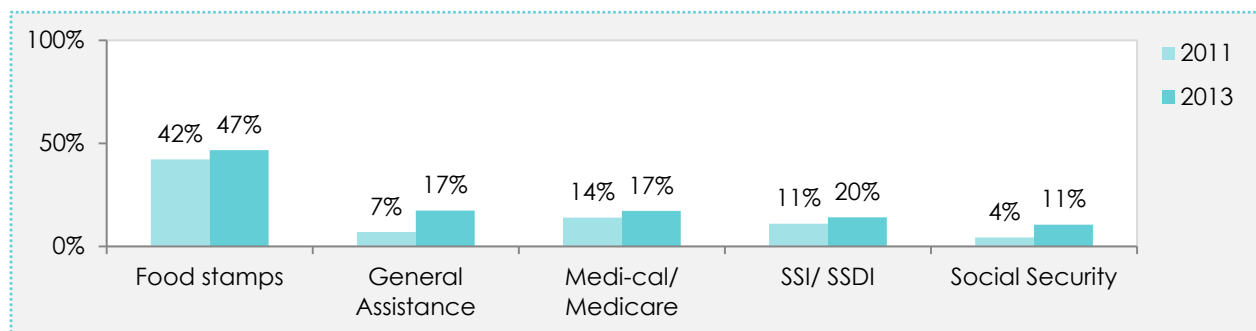
### Government Assistance

As set forth by the U.S. Department of Health and the Human Services Federal Poverty Guideline, for any person to be eligible for support services and programs in 2013, their annual income must not exceed \$11,490. For families, \$4,020 is added for each subsequent member.<sup>9,10</sup>

Sixty-nine percent of respondents reported they were receiving government assistance in 2013. The greatest percentage of survey respondents reported receiving CalFresh/food stamps or WIC (47%), followed by General Assistance (17%), and SSI or SSDI (20%).

The median income from government benefits was \$350 a month. Twenty-eight percent of respondents who reported an income from government benefits reported receiving less than \$250 per month. Only 7% received more than \$1,000 a month.

### OF THOSE RECEIVING SOME FORM OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE, TYPES OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)



Multiple response question, responses will not add to 100%.

2011: 496 respondents offering 692 responses; 2013: 254 respondents offering 441 responses.

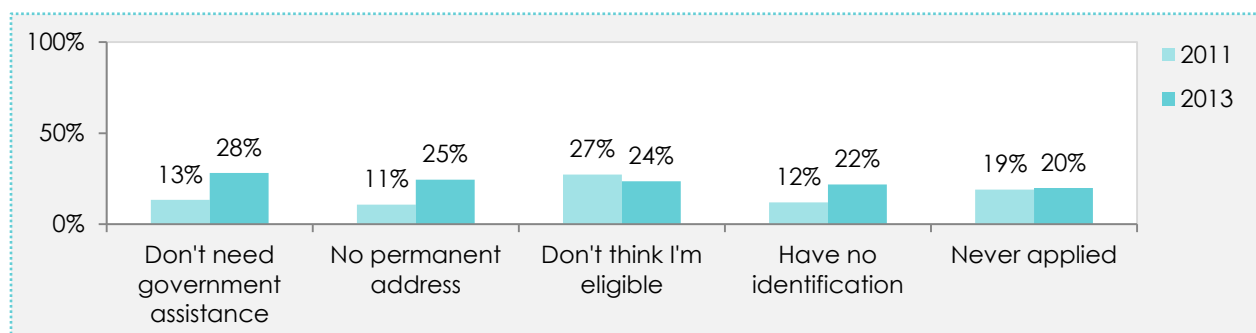
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### Reasons for Not Receiving Government Assistance

Of those who reported they were not receiving government assistance, the top three reasons were: they did not need assistance (28%), they had no permanent address (25%), and they did not think they were eligible for government assistance (24%). One in five had never applied.

### REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP 5 RESPONSES IN 2013)



Multiple response question, responses will not add to 100%.

Multiple response question with 157 respondents offering 239 responses in 2011 and 110 respondents offering 190 responses in 2013

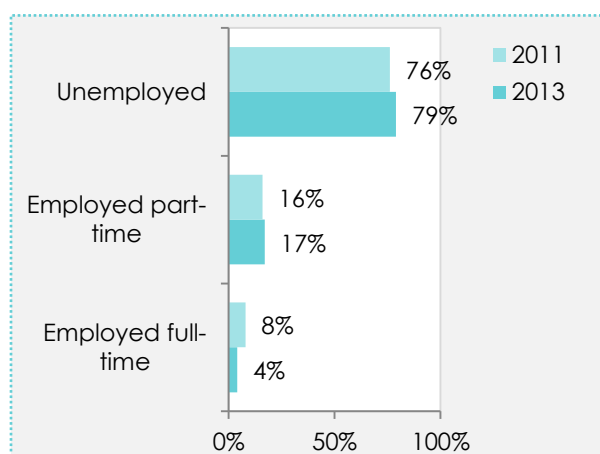
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Employment Status

Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents reported being unemployed, this was slightly higher than in 2011. Four percent of survey respondents reported being employed full-time, 17% reported being employed part-time, including seasonal or temporary employment.

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS



N: 2011=498; 2013=366

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Note: Part-time employment includes seasonal and temporary workers, full-time includes self-employed, total excludes those who were retired or reported student status.

## Barriers to Employment

Of those who reported being unemployed in 2013, the most commonly cited barriers to obtaining a job included no available jobs (37%) and health problems (31%). The percentage of respondents reporting health problems as a barrier increased from 21% in 2011. Other responses included lack of transportation (28%), no permanent address (28%) and alcohol or drug issues (26%).

### RESPONDENTS' BARRIERS TO OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT (TOP RESPONSES)

	2011	2013	11-13 Net Change
No jobs	44%	37%	-7
Health problems	21%	31%	10
No transportation	27%	28%	1
No permanent address	27%	28%	1
Alcohol/drug issues	23%	26%	3
No phone	25%	24%	-1
Disabled	19%	19%	0

Multiple response question, responses will not add to 100%. Multiple response question with 358 respondents offering 1,204 responses in 2011 and 329 respondents offering 882 responses in 2013

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

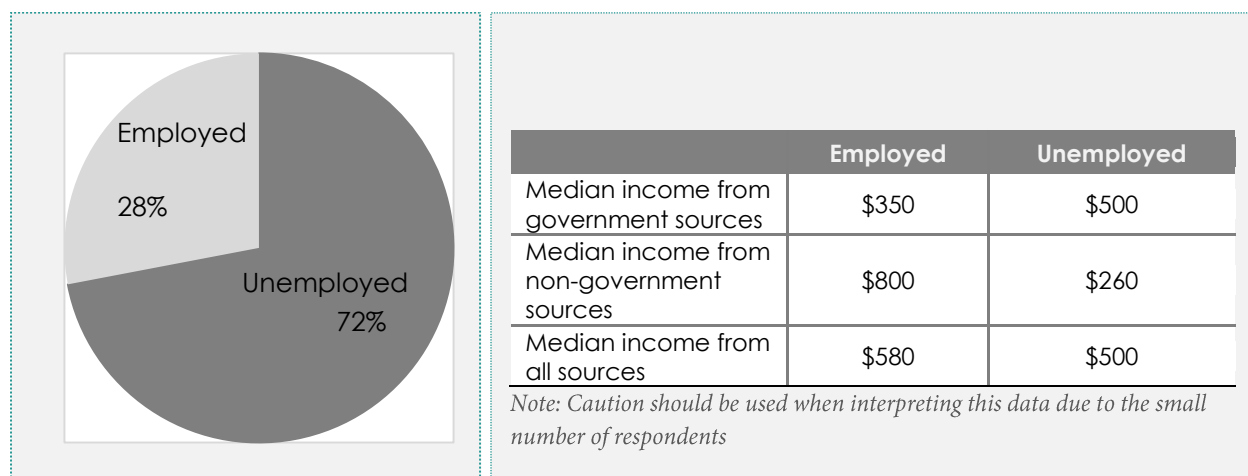
## Income from Private Sources

Forty-six percent of respondents reported they did not have any form of income from private or public sources.

The median income from government sources was \$350 for those with employment and \$500 for those without. The median income from non-governmental sources was \$800 for those with employment, while it was \$260 for those without.



### EMPLOYMENT AND MEDIAN MONTHLY INCOME



Employment status n= 366 Income n= 239

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### Panhandling

When respondents were asked specifically about panhandling, 23% reported panhandling. Of those who reported their earnings, the average monthly income was \$148 per month. This is less than \$5 per day.

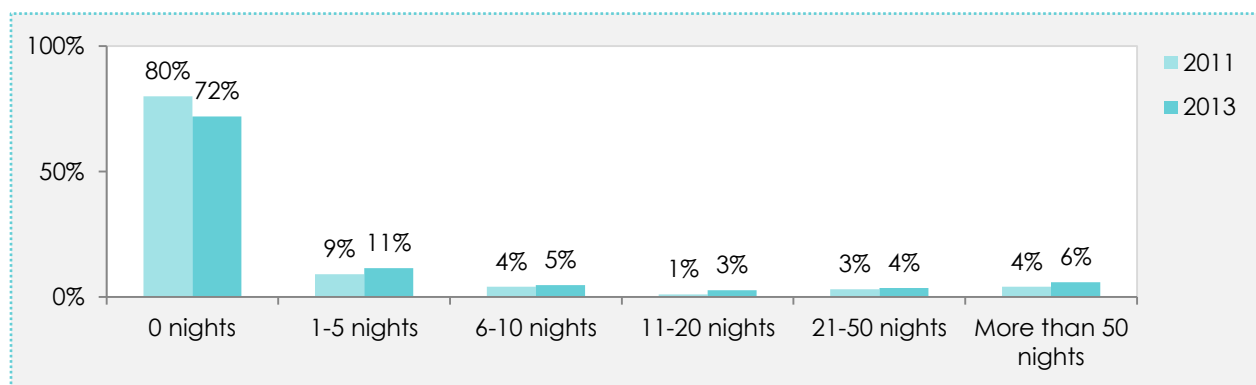
### Justice System

It is estimated that one in five people released from prison will experience homelessness, as they experience barriers to employment and housing opportunities. Those who are released from incarceration are more likely to return if they are homeless.<sup>xi</sup> At the same time, those experiencing homelessness are more vulnerable to incarceration.<sup>xii</sup>

### Incarceration, Probation and Parole

Twenty-eight percent of homeless survey respondents had spent at least one night in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey, higher than in 2011 (20%). Eleven percent of survey respondents spent between one and five days, and 6% reported they had spent more than 50 nights incarcerated. Fifteen percent were on probation or parole at the time of the survey. Nine percent of respondents indicated that they were in jail/prison just prior to their homelessness.

### NUMBER OF NIGHTS RESPONDENTS REPORTED SPENDING IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE YEAR PRIOR TO THE SURVEY



N: 2011=495; 2013=342

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Health

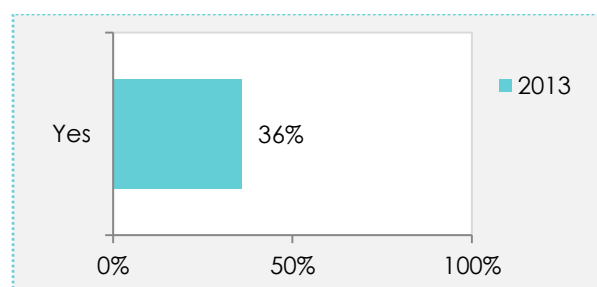
Without regular access to health care, individuals suffer preventable illness, longer hospitalizations, and a higher rate of premature death. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.

<sup>13</sup> A study conducted by the National Health Care for the Homeless found that the average life expectancy for a person without permanent housing was between 42 and 52 years. That's more than 25 years younger than the life expectancy of the average person in the United States.

### Access to Medical Care

Thirty-six percent of respondents reported they went without needed medical care since becoming homeless, a higher percentage than in 2011 (23%). Twenty-eight percent reported they had not needed health care in the 12 months prior to the survey.

### HAVE YOU NEEDED HEALTH CARE AND BEEN UNABLE TO RECEIVE IT SINCE BECOMING HOMELESS THIS LAST TIME?



2013=261

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Note: The wording of this question changed between 2011 and 2013.

## Sources of Medical Care

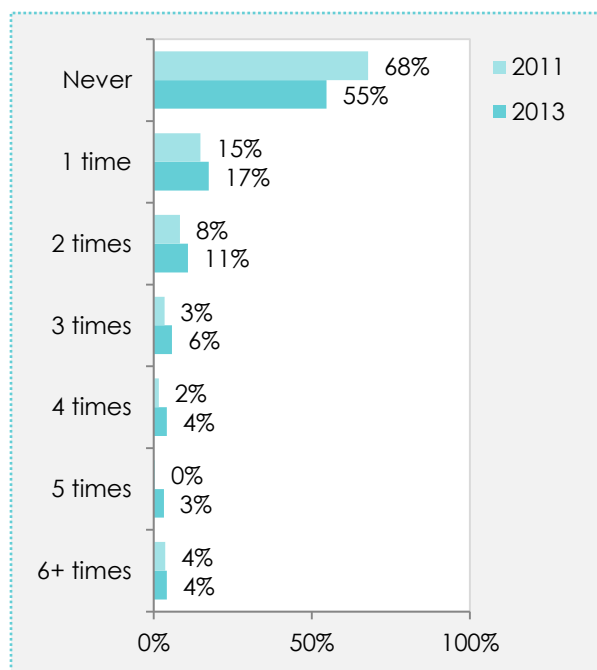
Forty-nine percent of respondents reported primarily accessing care through free public health clinics (including HPHP Coral Street Clinic, Salud Para La Gente, Dominican Mobile Van and Emeline Clinic). More than a quarter (27%) reported using local emergency rooms, and 2% reported accessing care through a Department of Veterans Affairs facility.

### Emergency Room Use

A study of ER use among those experiencing homelessness shows homeless individuals are three times more likely than the general population to use an emergency department at least once in a year and homelessness is associated with repeated emergency department use.<sup>14</sup> Emergency room use is costly to the public health care system.

Respondents were asked how many times they had used the ER to access medical care in the past year. Fifty-five percent reported they had not used the ER in the year prior to the survey, a lower percentage than in 2011. Four percent reported they had used the ER 6 or more times in the 12 months prior to the survey.

**NUMBER OF TIMES RESPONDENTS USED THE EMERGENCY ROOM IN THE YEAR PRIOR TO THE SURVEY**



N: 2011=494; 2013=344

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

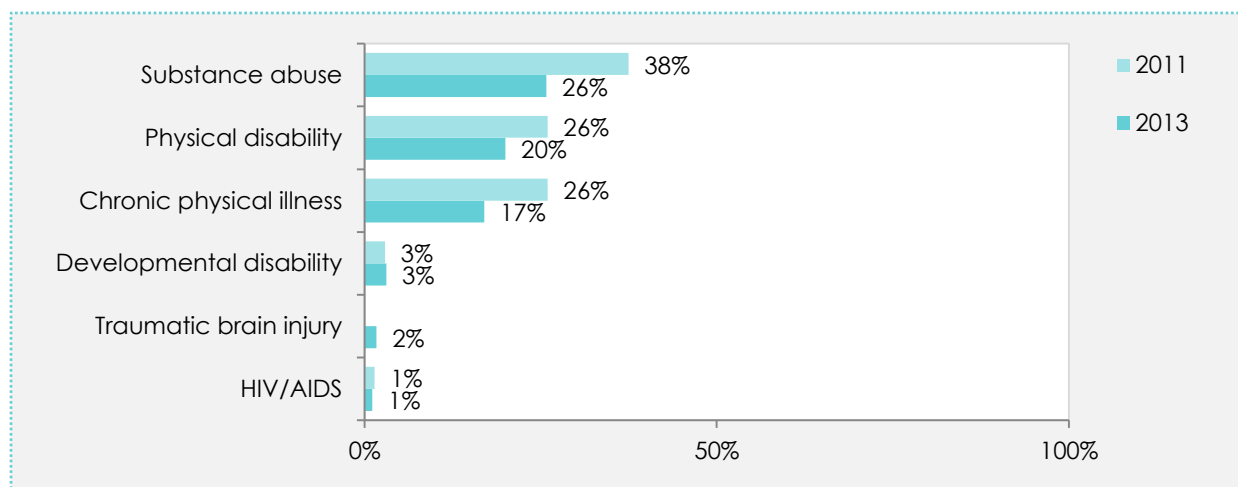
## Disabling Conditions

More than two thirds of respondents (68%) reported one or multiple disabling conditions. These conditions included chronic substance abuse, physical or mental disabilities, chronic physical illness, and severe mental health conditions. Forty-three percent of survey respondents reported a disabling condition limited their ability to get or keep a job in 2013.

## Health Conditions

The most frequently cited health condition was substance abuse, though the percentage decreased from 38% in 2011 to 26% in 2013. One in five respondents reported having a physical disability and 17% reported experiencing a chronic physical illness. Three percent of respondents reported a developmental disability, similar to 2011. Respondents were asked about Traumatic Brain Injury for the first time in 2013, 2% reported the condition. One percent reported having HIV/AIDS in 2013, similar to 2011.

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH PHYSICAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



2011: Substance Abuse=491, Physical Disability= 489, Developmental Disability=486, HIV/AIDS=488.

2013: N=356

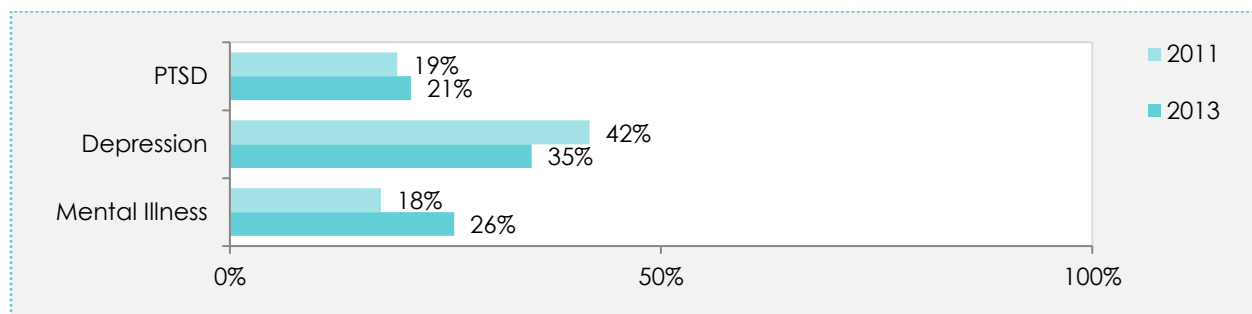
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Mental Health Conditions

More than half of survey respondents reported at least one mental health condition in 2013 (55%). Thirty-five percent of respondents reported experiencing chronic depression, 21% Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and 26% reported another form of mental illness, including schizophrenia or bi-polar disorder. Compared to respondents in 2011, fewer 2013 respondents reported depression (42% to 35%).

### PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING PTSD, DEPRESSION, AND OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES



2011: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)=484, Depression=489, Mental Illness=479,  
2013: N=356

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA

## Domestic/Partner Violence or Abuse

An equal percent of men and women (6%) were currently experiencing domestic/family violence. Although domestic violence is consistently underreported, these percentages for the homeless survey respondents are much higher than the general U.S. population, where 1.8% of women reported being raped, physically assaulted, or stalked in the previous 12 months.<sup>xv</sup>



## HUD Defined Homeless Subpopulations

### Subpopulations

In 2010, the federal government published a plan known as Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. In the plan, the federal government identified three primary subpopulations upon which to focus - chronically homeless, veterans, and families - in order to move towards the goal of ending homelessness. Since that time, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released an amendment to Opening Doors, which focuses on preventing and ending youth homelessness. The 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey focused on gathering data for each of these HUD defined subpopulations.

### Chronic Homelessness



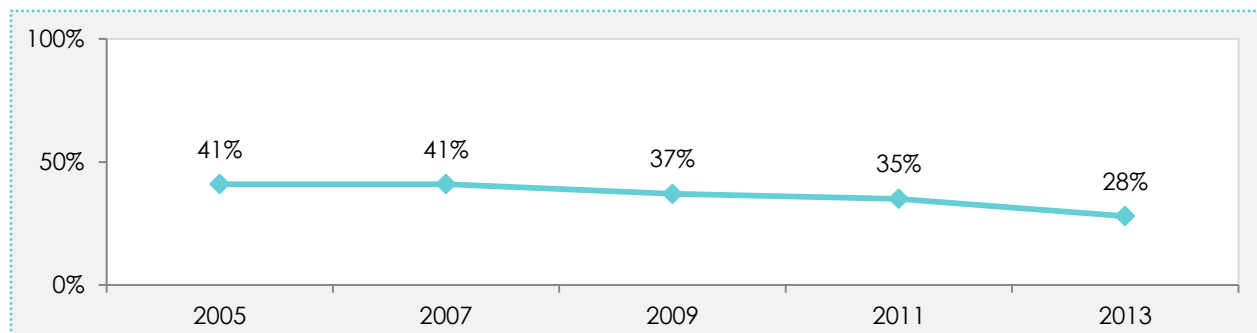
The mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population. The public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to existing poverty and homeless services.

Chronically homeless individuals have been a priority of the federal government's efforts to end homelessness for a numbers of years. The USICH reported that 16% of the national homeless population was chronically homeless in 2012; this translates to 99,894 chronically homeless persons nationwide in 2012. The federal strategic plan to end homelessness includes a plan to end chronic homelessness by 2015 by focusing on permanent supportive housing for those with the greatest needs and barriers to housing stability.

## Prevalence of Chronic Homelessness

In Santa Cruz County, there were 989 individuals and persons in families experiencing chronic homelessness in 2013, a decrease from 1,004 in 2011. As a percent of the homeless population, those experiencing chronic homelessness decreased from 35% to 28% between 2011 and 2013.

### CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PERSONS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HOMELESS POPULATION

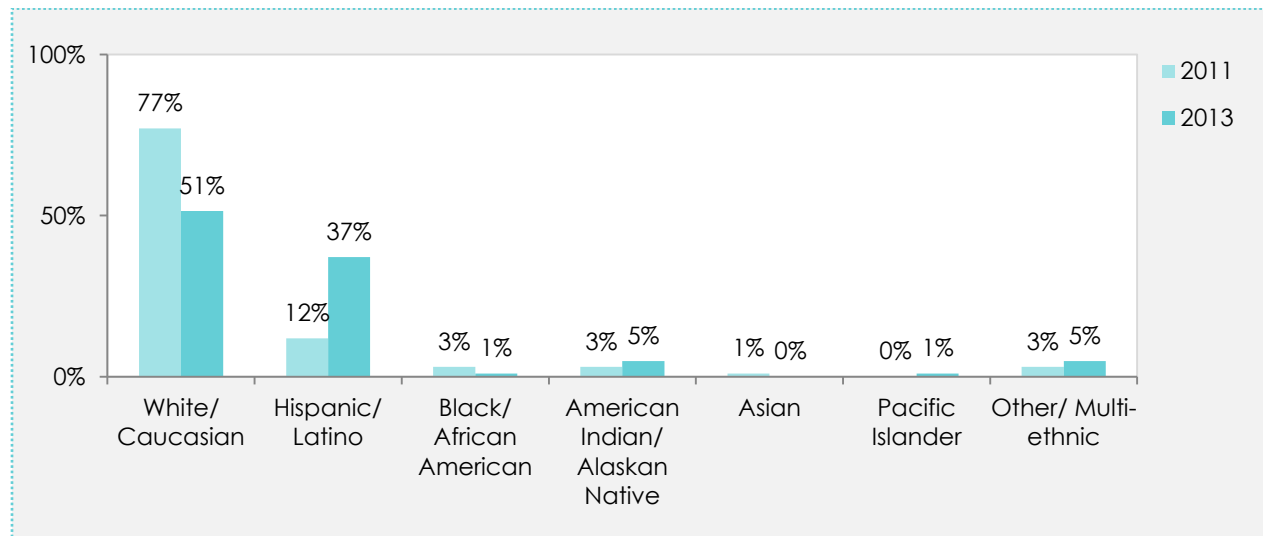


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Demographics of the Chronic Homelessness

A total of 105 surveys were conducted with individuals who were experiencing chronic homelessness. Of those individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in 2013, 92% were unsheltered. There was a higher percentage of men (71%) who were chronically homeless as compared to the non-chronic homeless population (64%). They were also more likely to be over the age of 40; 59% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were over the age of 40 compared to 49% of the non-chronic population.

Between 2011 and 2013, the race/ethnicity of those surveyed shifted. In 2011, more than three quarters of chronically homeless survey respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian, this percentage decreased to 51% in 2013. Alternatively, 37% of the 2013 survey population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (up from 12% in 2011).

**CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION BY ETHNICITY**

N: 2011=193; 2013=105

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

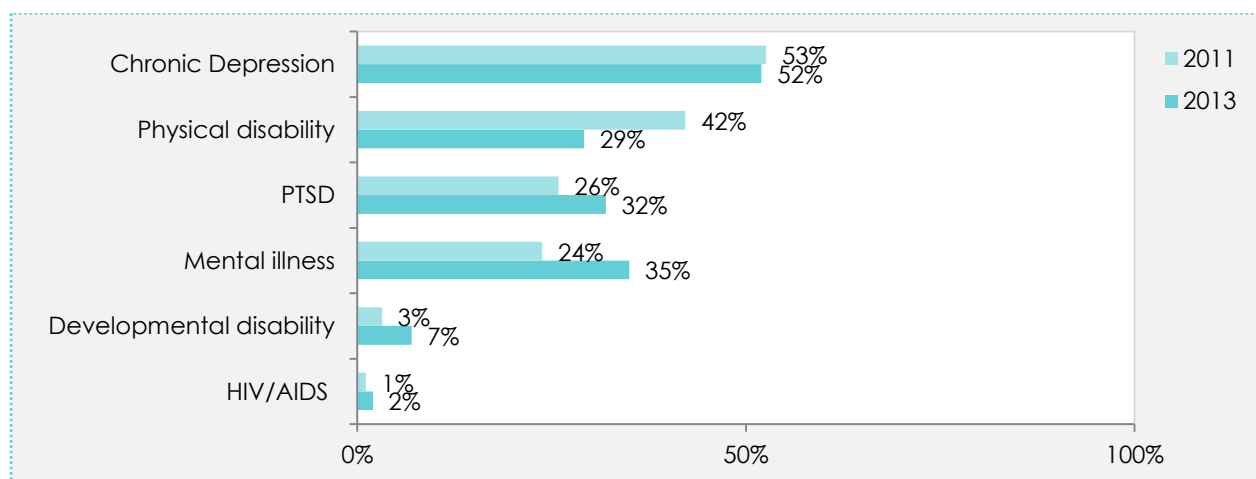
Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

## Disabling Conditions

By definition, those who are chronically homeless have a disabling condition or a family member with a disabling condition. However, more than half (59%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported experiencing two or more disabling conditions in 2013. Between 2011 and 2013, the percentage of chronically homeless respondents who reported a physical disability decreased, while the percentage those who reported chronic depression or a mental illness increased. The greatest disparity was between the 52% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who suffered from chronic depression, compared to the 28% of non-chronically homeless who reported suffering chronic depression.

Twenty nine percent of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness said that mental health services would have helped prevent them from becoming homeless and 41% said drug and alcohol counseling would have done the same. When asked if their disabling conditions prevented them from getting a job, 66% reported it had, much higher than the 33% of non-chronic individuals.

### PERCENTAGE OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS RESPONDENTS WHO WERE EXPERIENCING THE FOLLOWING DISABLING CONDITIONS



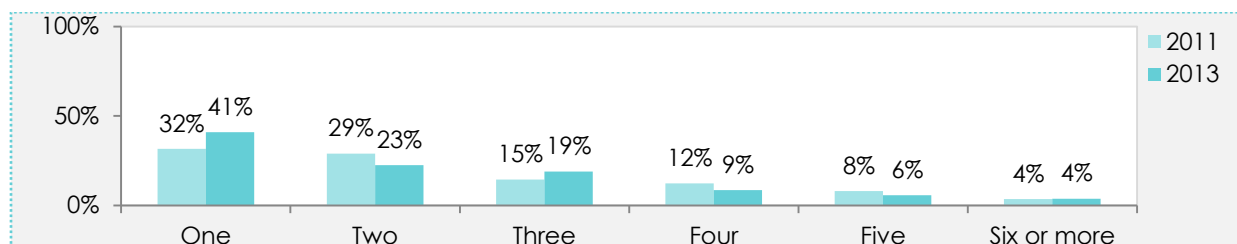
2011: Depression N=190, Alcohol abuse N=192, Drug abuse N=192, Mental illness N=146, Physical disability N=152, Chronic health problems N=142, PTSD N=143, Developmental disability N=148, HIV / AIDS N=135.

2013: Depression N=106, Alcohol abuse N=106, Drug abuse N=106, Mental illness N=106, Physical disability N=106, PTSD N=106, Developmental disability N=106, HIV / AIDS N=106.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### PERCENTAGE OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS RESPONDENTS WHO WERE EXPERIENCING THE FOLLOWING NUMBER OF DISABLING CONDITIONS



N: 2011=193; 2013=106

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

### Emergency Room Use

More than half (63%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported using public health clinics as their usual source of medical care, higher than the 43% of the non-chronic population. One in five chronically homeless survey respondents reported using the emergency room as their usual source of care, as compared to 29% for the non-chronic population. Forty-seven percent of chronically homeless survey respondents reported having used the emergency room at least once in the 12 months, similar to that of the non-chronic population (45%).

### Primary Cause of Homelessness for the Chronically Homeless

Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness cited a lost job (26%) as the primary cause of their homelessness, followed by alcohol and drug abuse (25%), inability to pay rent (17%), and mental health issues (12%). Only 13% of non-chronically homeless individuals reported alcohol and drug abuse as the primary cause of their homelessness.

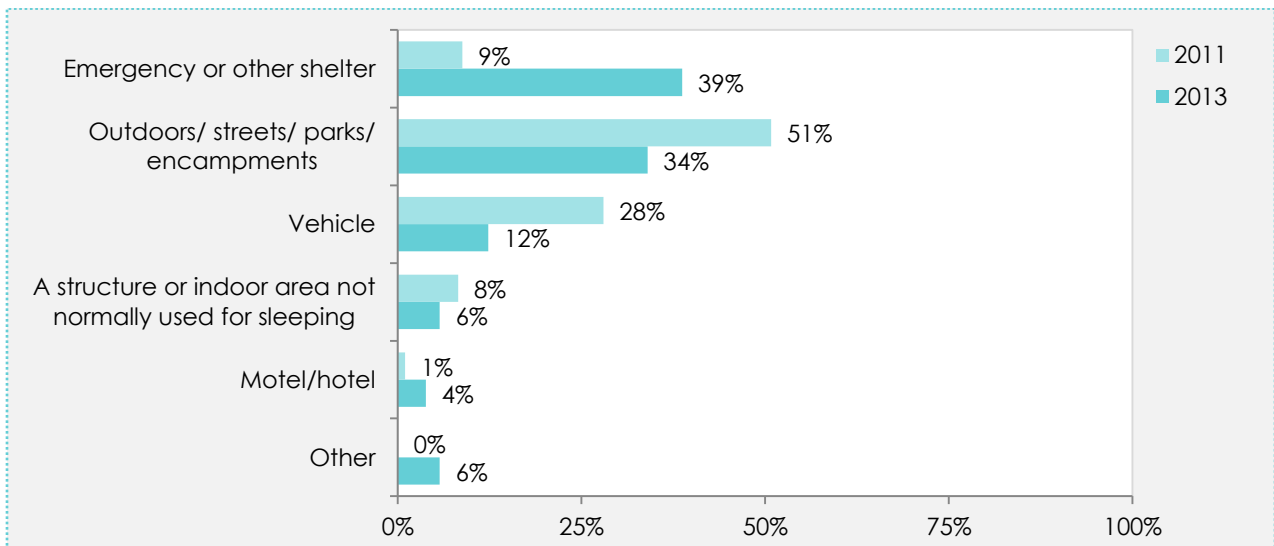
### Government Assistance and Local Support Services for the Chronically Homeless

Twenty-three percent of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness reported receiving no form of government assistance, compared to the 34% of the non-chronic population. Of those receiving government assistance, 32% reported receiving income of \$200 or less.

### Usual Sleeping Places of the Chronically Homeless

When looking at the usual sleeping places of those experiencing chronic homelessness over time, there was a large increase from 9% sleeping in shelters in 2011 to 39% 2013. Between 2011 and 2013, there were fewer chronically homeless respondents sleeping in vehicles, outdoors/streets/parks/encampments, and slightly fewer individuals living in structures or indoor areas not intended for sleeping.



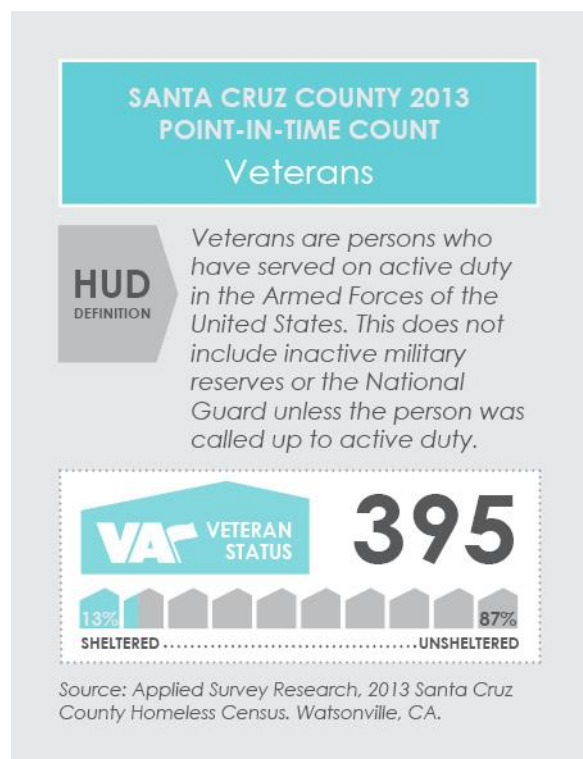
**WHERE RESPONDENTS USUALLY STAY AT NIGHT (CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS)**

N: 2011=193; 2013=106

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

## Veteran Status



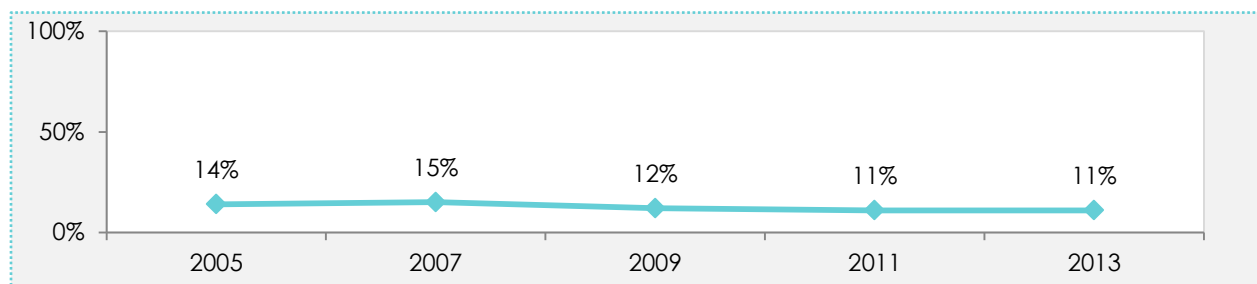
There are a number of factors that put U.S. veterans at an increased risk for homelessness. Veterans have higher rates of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, sexual assault and substance abuse. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the street than in shelters and often remain on the street for extended periods of time.<sup>xvi</sup>

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Department of Veterans Affairs reported there were 62,619 homeless veterans nationally in 2012. Put another way, 13% of all homeless adults are veterans.<sup>xvii</sup> The federal strategic plan to end homelessness includes a plan to end veteran homelessness by 2015 by increasing access to housing and health services.

## Number of Homeless Veterans

During the 2013 Point-in-Time count in Santa Cruz County, there were 395 veterans experiencing homelessness, representing 11% of the total population of those experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. This was slightly higher than in 2011 when 274 individuals or 10% of the homeless population were identified as veterans.

### VETERANS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HOMELESS POPULATION



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## Demographics of Homeless Veterans

White or Caucasian veterans experiencing homelessness made up 53% of the survey population, while 17% identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 9% as Black/African-American. There were three female veterans experiencing homelessness identified in the 2013 homeless survey, accounting for 6% of the veteran

population. Fifty-five percent of homeless veteran survey respondents were over the age of 50, a much higher rate than the non-veteran population, of which 28% were over the age of 50.

### Usual Sleeping Places for Homeless Veterans

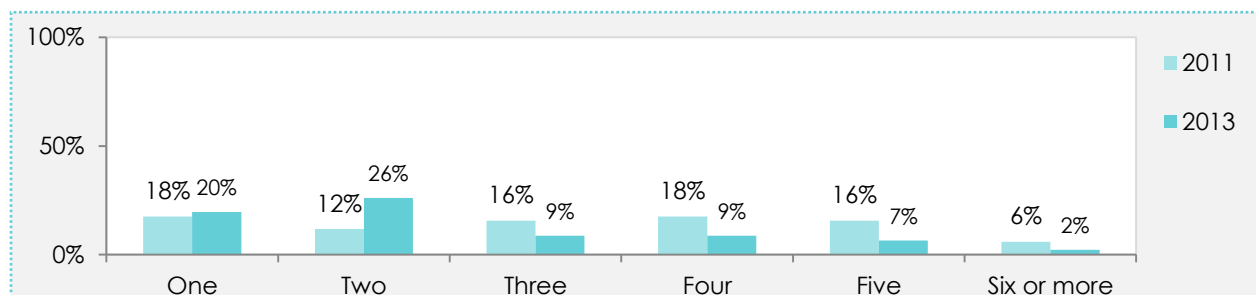
Seventy-five percent of veterans experiencing homelessness lived alone. When asked where they slept at night, 49% reported sleeping in a shelter, 13% reported sleeping outdoors, on the streets or in parks, and in encampments, and 11% slept in a vehicle.

It was the first time being homeless for 40% of veterans. Of those who had been homeless before, 52% had been homeless for more than a year during their current episode of homelessness. One in five (21%) reported being homeless at least six times in the three years prior to the survey.

### Disabling Conditions among Homeless Veterans

More than two-thirds (72%) of homeless veteran respondents were experiencing one or more disabling conditions including physical disabilities (35%), PTSD (33%), depression (30%), and other mental illnesses (20%). More than half (51%) reported needing health care since they most recently became homeless and being unable to receive it.

#### NUMBER OF DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERAN RESPONDENTS



N: 2011=51; 2013=46

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

\*Zero isn't shown so percentages will not add up to 100%.

### Primary Cause of Homelessness for Veterans

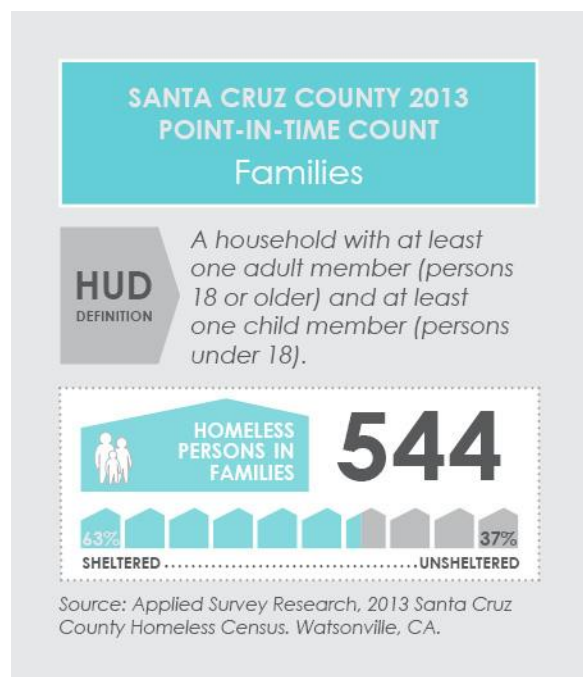
When asked about the primary cause of their homelessness, the largest percentage of homeless veteran survey respondents cited an inability to afford rent (24%) or an illness or medical problem (also 24%), followed by job loss (22%). When asked what might have prevented their homelessness, 42% of respondents reported employment assistance, followed by rent or mortgage assistance (31%), and alcohol/drug counseling (22%).

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### **Government Assistance for Homeless Veterans**

All survey respondents were asked if they received any government assistance. Only thirteen percent of homeless veteran respondents said they were not receiving assistance. Forty-nine percent said they were receiving food stamps. Forty percent were receiving Veteran Disability Compensation, and 28% were receiving Social Security compensation.

## Homeless Families with Children



Homelessness among families most often affects families with younger children. The risk of homelessness is highest among families with children under the age of 6.<sup>xviii</sup> Children in families experiencing homelessness have an increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.<sup>xix</sup>

While many homeless subpopulations have decreased in recent years, the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness has increased.<sup>xx</sup> It was estimated that there were more than 239,403 persons in families experiencing homelessness nationally in 2012.<sup>xxi</sup>

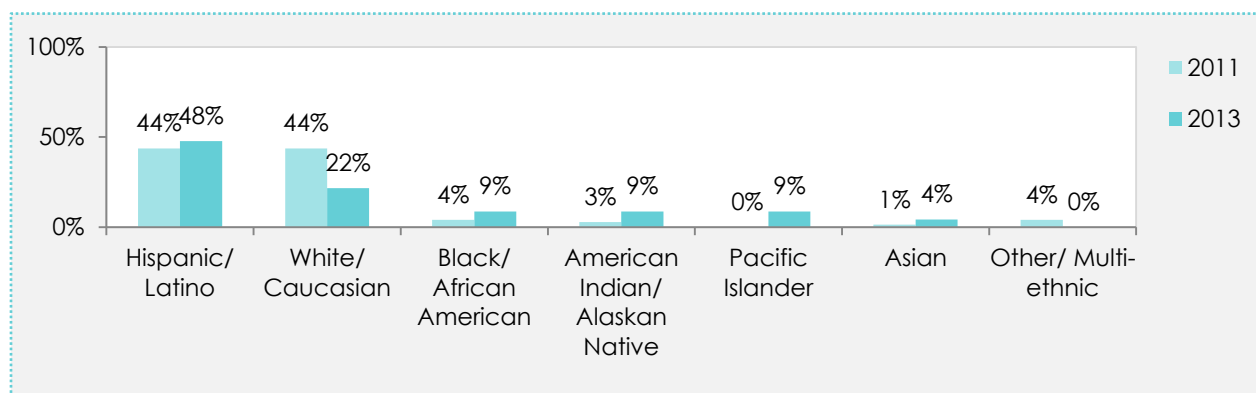
### Number of Homeless Families with Children

There were 165 homeless families with children in Santa Cruz County, according to the 2013 Point-in-Time count. This included 544 individuals, 292 of whom were under the age of 18. The number of persons in families increased from 364 persons in 2011. This increase was largely due to the increased participation of the County Office of Education and their new outreach strategies employed in 2013 to call and verify the location of each child and family in their records. In order to ensure numbers were unduplicated, only those who were not sheltered in county homeless shelters and who met the unsheltered definition required by HUD were reported. This effort resulted in an additional 83 individuals in families included in the Point-in-Time Count.

### Demographics of Homeless Families with Children

There were 23 surveys conducted with individuals in homeless families in the county. A majority (52%) of survey respondents in families experiencing homelessness were between the ages of 31 and 50. Forty-eight percent were Hispanic/Latino, much higher than the 34% of individuals experiencing homelessness who were not in families. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents were women, a dramatic difference from the non-family respondents at 30%.



**HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS WITH CHILDREN BY ETHNICITY**

N: 2011=71; 2013=23

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Cruz County Homeless Census*. Watsonville, CA.

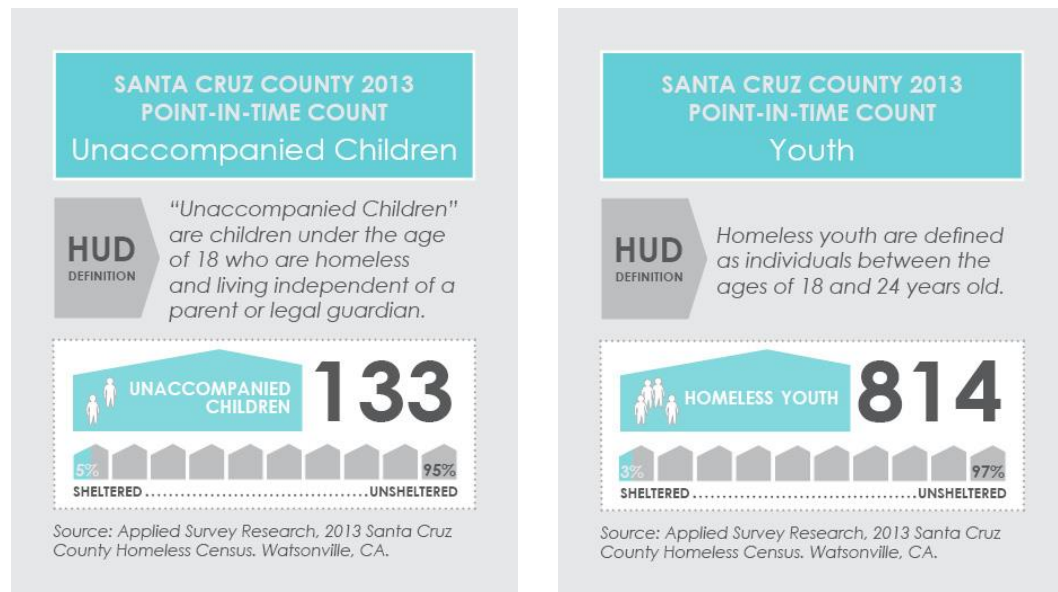
**County Residency for Homeless Families with Children**

Seventy percent of homeless respondents in families reported living in Santa Cruz County at the time that they became homeless, most of them (67%) in Watsonville. More than half (52%) of respondents had lived in the county for a year or more. For more than half (57%) of homeless respondents with families, this was their first time experiencing homelessness.

**Government Assistance for Homeless Families with Children**

Seventy percent of homeless family respondents were unemployed. However, 24% indicated that they were not receiving any form of government assistance. The two most commonly used forms of assistance were food stamps (67%) and Medicare (33%). Of those receiving assistance, the total value for 50% of homeless family respondents receiving government assistance was \$500 or less a month, about the same as the 52% of non-family homeless respondents.

## Unaccompanied Homeless Children and Youth



Data on unaccompanied homeless children (under 18) and transition age youth (18-24) are extremely limited at both the local and national level. The data that are available suggest that the negative effects of homelessness on children are high. Homeless youth have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment.<sup>xxii</sup>

In 2012, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness amended the federal strategic plan to end homelessness to include specific strategies and supports to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth. As part of this effort, the Department of Housing and Urban Development placed increased interest on gathering data on unaccompanied homeless children and youth during the 2013 Point-in-Time Count.

Santa Cruz County has made worked to collect quantitative and qualitative data on homeless children and youth by conducting a specialized counts of these populations in 2009, 2011 and again in 2013. Data were gathered through homeless peers who conducted a specialized street count. The Santa Cruz County Office of Education also coordinated all local McKinney Vento Liaisons to call and verify the location of each child and family in their records, resulting in an additional 19 unaccompanied children under the age of 18.

### Prevalence of Unaccompanied Children and Transition Age Youth

Unaccompanied children and youth under the age of 25 accounted for 27% of the homeless population in Santa Cruz County. The Point-in-Time count identified 133 unaccompanied children under the age of 18 and 814 transition age youth in 2013. There is no comparable data from 2011 due to changes in the reporting requirements.

There were a total of 37 unaccompanied youth surveyed for this project. Of those, 92% were between the ages of 18 and 24, while the remainder (8%) was under the age of 18. Youth survey respondents differed from adults in a number of ways including basic demographics. Youth reported greater ethnic diversity, with 30% identifying as White/Caucasian, 38% Hispanic/Latino and 18% multi-ethnic. While adults over age 25 years old were largely male, the youth population was almost evenly split between male and females. The greatest difference between homeless youth and their adult counter parts was the percentage reporting a history with the Foster Care system, 31% compared to 13%.

A similar percentage of youth under 25 and adults over 25 reported experiencing homelessness for the first time. Yet, on average youth reported their current period of homelessness was shorter than the population 25 years and over. Fifty-six percent of youth had been on the street for less than 6 months.

# Appendix I: Homeless Census & Survey Methodology

## Overview

The purpose of the 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey was to produce a Point-in-Time (PIT) estimate of the number of people in Santa Cruz County who experience homelessness. The results of the street count were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total number of homeless people in Santa Cruz County at one point in time. A more detailed description of the methodology used for the homeless census and survey follows.

## Components of the Homeless Count Method

The census methodology had two components:

- » The street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals.
- » The shelter and institution count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals.

## Street Count Methodology

### Definition

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of unsheltered homeless persons was used:

- » Individuals and families with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

## Research Design

Santa Cruz County covers approximately 445 square miles.<sup>23</sup> The logistics for conducting a PIT street count of homeless people in a county like Santa Cruz required the enumeration of both unsheltered and sheltered homeless counts in a single day in order to minimize potential duplicate counting of homeless persons.

## Volunteer and Worker Recruitment

An enumeration effort of this magnitude can only be successful with the assistance of those who possess an intimate knowledge of the activities and locations of homeless people. Therefore, the recruitment and training of homeless persons to work as enumerators was an essential part of the street count methodology. Previous research has shown that homeless people, teamed with staff members from homeless service agencies, can be part of a productive and reliable work force.

To work on the street count, prospective enumerators were required to attend a one-hour information and training session. Training sessions were held at multiple locations throughout Santa Cruz County during the week prior to the street count. These sessions were attended primarily by homeless persons, staff from homeless service agencies, and staff from the county of Santa Cruz.

Homeless persons who completed the required training session were paid \$10.00 on the morning they reported to work for the street count. Homeless workers were also paid \$10.00 per hour for their work on the count, and were reimbursed for any expenses (mainly transportation costs) they incurred during the hours they worked. In total, 72 homeless persons, homeless service providers, city and county workers, and community volunteers participated in the two-day count.

### **Street Count Teams**

On the mornings of the census, two-person teams were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. A team was ideally composed of one volunteer and one homeless person who had attended a training and information session. Street count teams were provided with census tract maps of their assigned areas, census tally sheets, a review of the census training documents and techniques, and other supplies. Prior to deployment, volunteers and workers were provided with a reminder of how to enumerate thoroughly without disturbing homeless people or anyone else encountered during the street census. Over the two-day census period, all 52 census tracts in Santa Cruz County were enumerated.

### **Safety Precautions**

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Precautions were taken to prepare a safe environment in all deployment centers. Law enforcement districts were notified of pending street count activity in their jurisdictions. No official reports were received in regards to unsafe or at-risk situations occurring during the street census in any area of the county.

### **Street Count Deployment**

On January 22nd, deployment centers in Felton, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville were in operation on the morning of the count. The enumeration effort was conducted between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. This early morning enumeration strategy was selected in order to avoid duplicate counting of sheltered homeless individuals and to increase the visibility of the street homeless. To further mitigate the potential for double-counting individuals as sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals, the teams enumerating tracts containing shelters were dispatched from the deployment centers first, and shelters were requested to release their occupants later than usual to allow the enumeration team sufficient time to count the unsheltered homeless individuals in the vicinity. In addition, many of the homeless workers had extensive local knowledge of the homeless population, which enhanced the accuracy of homeless profiling by the enumeration teams and prevented the double-counting of shelter occupants.



Volunteers and County of Santa Cruz staff used personal or agency vehicles to transport homeless workers and volunteers to and from assigned census tracts (although some homeless workers did provide their own transportation). All accessible streets, roads, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traveled by foot, bike, or car. Maps of census tracts that contained both incorporated and unincorporated areas were color-coded with clearly demarcated city boundaries. A separate tally sheet was used for each jurisdiction included in the census tract to ensure the integrity of the jurisdictional census data.

## ***Shelter and Institution Count Methodology***

### **Goal**

The goal of the shelter count was to gain an accurate count of the number of homeless persons who were being temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across Santa Cruz County.

### **Data Collection**

The basic approach was to identify and contact agencies that temporarily house homeless people and request that those agencies send ASR a count of the number of homeless persons housed in their programs on the night of Jan. 21, 2013. In 2013, the participating shelters were determined by those listed on the Housing Inventory Chart reported to HUD. Participating agencies included:

- » Emergency Shelters
- » Transitional Housing Facilities
- » Safe Havens

Shelter facilities reported their occupancies for the night prior to the first day of enumeration to Applied Survey Research (ASR) by an online survey, paper survey, or telephone call.

## ***Homeless Census Challenges and Assumptions***

### **Challenges**

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as diverse as Santa Cruz County. While homeless populations are usually concentrated around city emergency shelters and homeless service facilities, homeless individuals and families can also be found in suburbs, commercial districts, and outlying county areas that are not easily accessed by enumerators.

Homeless populations include many difficult-to-count subsets such as:

- » Chronically homeless persons who may or may not access social, health, or shelter services;
- » Persons living in vehicles who relocate every few days;
- » Persons who have children and therefore stay “under the radar” for fear of Child Protective Services;
- » Homeless youth, who tend to keep themselves less visible than homeless adults;
- » Homeless people who live in isolated rural areas; and

- » Homeless people who sleep in unfit structures.

## Census Undercount

For a variety of reasons, homeless persons generally do not want to be seen, and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful the outreach effort is, an undercount of the homeless population will result, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as unaccompanied youth and families.

In a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, the methods employed, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers and currently or previously homeless census enumerators, the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy.

By counting the minimum number of homeless persons on the streets at a given Point-in-Time, the homeless census methodology is conservative and therefore most likely results in an undercount of homeless persons with immigration issues, the working homeless, families, and street youth. This conservative approach is necessary to preserve the integrity of the data collected. Even though the census is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed, coupled with the homeless survey, is the most comprehensive approach available and does provide valuable data for local and federal service agencies.

## Survey Methodology

### Planning and Implementation

The survey of 369 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in Santa Cruz County. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services. The survey findings also provide a measure of the changes in the composition of the homeless population since 2009 and 2011.

Surveys were conducted by homeless workers and service provider volunteers who were trained by ASR. Training sessions led potential interviewers through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information and detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Because of confidentiality and privacy issues, service providers typically conducted the surveys administered within shelters. Homeless workers were compensated at a rate of \$5.00 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily collected if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were selected as an incentive to participate in the survey. These socks were easy to obtain and distribute, were thought to have wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget.

## Survey Sampling

In order to select a random sample of respondents, survey workers were trained to employ a randomized “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach the third person they encountered whom they considered to be an eligible survey respondent.<sup>24</sup> If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed.

Strategic attempts were made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence victims, and families, including recruiting survey workers from these subset groups.

Trained homeless interviewers administered surveys to the “street” homeless. Surveys were also administered in shelters and transitional housing programs. In order to assure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs.

## Data Collection

Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the street or shelter location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to be candid in their responses and were informed that these responses would be framed as general findings, would be kept confidential, and would not be traceable to any one individual.

Overall, the interviewers experienced excellent cooperation from respondents. This was likely influenced by the fact that nearly all of the street interviewers were homeless workers who had previously been, or were currently, fellow members of the homeless community. Another reason for interview cooperation may have been the incentive gift, which was given to respondents upon the completion of the interview.

## Data Analysis

### Survey Administration Details

In order to avoid potential duplication of respondents, the survey requested respondents’ initials and date of birth, so that duplication could be avoided without compromising the respondents’ anonymity. Upon completion of the survey effort, an extensive verification process was conducted to eliminate duplicates. This process examined respondents’ date of birth, initials, gender, ethnicity, and length of homelessness,

and consistencies in patterns of responses to other questions on the survey. This left 369 valid surveys for analysis. Due to the sensitive nature of the survey, respondents were not required to answer every survey question and respondents were asked to skip questions that were not applicable. For this reason, the number of respondents for each survey questions may not total 369.

### ***Survey Challenges and Limitation***

The 2013 Santa Cruz County Homeless Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. However, as mentioned previously, based on a Point-in-Time estimate of 3,536 homeless persons, the 369 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 3.35% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated homeless population in Santa Cruz County. These confidences can be applied to the survey findings because the survey was randomly administered.

There may be some variance in the data that the homeless individuals would have self-reported. In self-reporting survey research, there is always some room for misrepresentation. However, using a peer interviewing methodology is believed to allow the respondents to be more candid with their answers, and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Further, service providers recommended individuals who would be the best to conduct interviews and they received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. The service providers and ASR staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.

## Appendix II: Summary for the Continuum of Care Application

Each year the Santa Cruz County Continuum of Care, the Housing Action Partnership (HAP), submits the Point-in-Time count data to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) via the Homeless Data Exchange (HDX). The following data are the general Point-in-Time count data, including information on identified subpopulations in Santa Cruz County.

TOTAL POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS POPULATION					
	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Safe Haven		
Total number of persons (adults & children)	402	239	0	2,895	3,536

HOMELESS POPULATIONS					
Persons in households with at least one adult and one child	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional			
Total number of households	39	65		61	165
Total number of persons (adults & children)	149	194		201	544
Number of persons (under age 18)	93	109		90	292
Number of persons (age 18-24)	10	10		48	68
Number of persons (over age 24)	46	75		63	184
Persons in households with only children	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional			
Total number of households	4	0		124	128
Number of one-child households	2	0		122	124
Number of multi-child households	2	0		2	4
Total number of persons (under age 18)	6	0		127	133
Number of children in multi-child households	4	0		5	9
Persons in households without children	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Safe Haven		
Total number of households	226	45	0	2,195	2,466
Total number of persons (adults)	247	45	0	2,567	2,859
Number of persons (age 18-24)	9	15	0	790	814
Number of persons (over age 24)	238	30	0	1,777	2,045

HOMELESS SUBPOPULATIONS					
Chronically Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Safe Haven			
Chronically homeless individuals	74	0		883	957
Chronically homeless families (Total number of families)	0	0		9	9
Chronically homeless families (Total persons in household)	0	0		32	32
Other Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Safe Haven			
Total number of veterans (including female veterans)	52			343	395
Number of female veterans (subset of all veterans)	4			14	18
Severely mentally ill	233			1,476	1,709
Chronic substance abuse	79			785	864
Persons with HIV/AIDS	7			29	36
Victims of domestic violence (optional)	30			99	129



## Appendix III: Definitions and Abbreviations

**Chronic homelessness** is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years."

**Disabling condition**, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or developmental disability.

**Emergency shelter** is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility, or through the use of motel vouchers. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 30 days or less. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for victims and their children.

**Family** is defined by HUD as either an adult couple or a single adult with one or more minor children present.

**Homeless individuals**, according to the Stewart B. McKinney Act of 1987, are people who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and have a primary nighttime residence that is either a public or private shelter, an institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a

public or private location that is not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

**HUD** is the abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Sheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

**Single individual** refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth.

**Transitional housing** facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. It is housing in which homeless individuals may live up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services - which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination - may be provided by the organization managing the housing, or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

**Unsheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Opening doors: Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (December 2012). Housing Inventory Count and Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons: Data Collection Guidance Version 1.1.

<sup>3</sup> “Couch-surfing” is a slang term for those who have informal residence or who are staying on the couch of another family or individual.

<sup>4</sup> Additional information regarding the Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey can be found in the appendices, including: the homeless survey Methodology.

<sup>5</sup> Pecora, P., R. C. Kessler, J. Williams, et al. (2010). What works in foster care? Key components of success from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Caution should be used when interpreting this data due to the small number of surveys conducted among youth under age 25.

<sup>7</sup> Uzo Anucha, P. D. (2005). Conceptualizing Homeless Exits and Returns: The Case for a Multidimensional Response to Episodic Homelessness. Critical Social Work.

<sup>8</sup> SAMHSA. (n.d.). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved January 2013, from Homeless Resource Center: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov>

<sup>9</sup> Federal Register, Vol. 78, No. 16, Jan. 24, 2013, pp. 5182-5183

<sup>10</sup> Income from government sources is excluded from poverty guideline calculations. Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines do not consider non-cash government benefits (such as food stamps or housing subsidies) as income when determining the poverty levels for each fiscal year.

<sup>xi</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2013). Fact Sheet: Re-entry. Retrieved 2013 from [http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/re\\_entry](http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/re_entry)

<sup>xii</sup> Metraux, S. et al. (2007). Incarceration and Homelessness. 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research. Retrieved 2013 from <http://works.bepress.com/>

<sup>13</sup> Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. New England Journal of Medicine, 338, 1734-1740.

<sup>14</sup> Kushel, M. et al. (2002). Emergency Department Use Among the Homeless and Marginally Housed: Results From a Community-Based Study. American Journal of Public Health. 92(5): 778-784.

<sup>xv</sup> National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2000). Extend, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>xvi</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors: Homelessness Among Veterans. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

<sup>xvii</sup> UICH.. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

<sup>xviii</sup> U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2013 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

<sup>xix</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

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<sup>xxi</sup> USICHU. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

<sup>xxii</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). State and County Quick Facts.

<sup>24</sup> The survey method of systematically interviewing every  $n^{\text{th}}$  person encountered in a location is recommended by HUD in their publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, Second Revision, January 2008, p. 37.